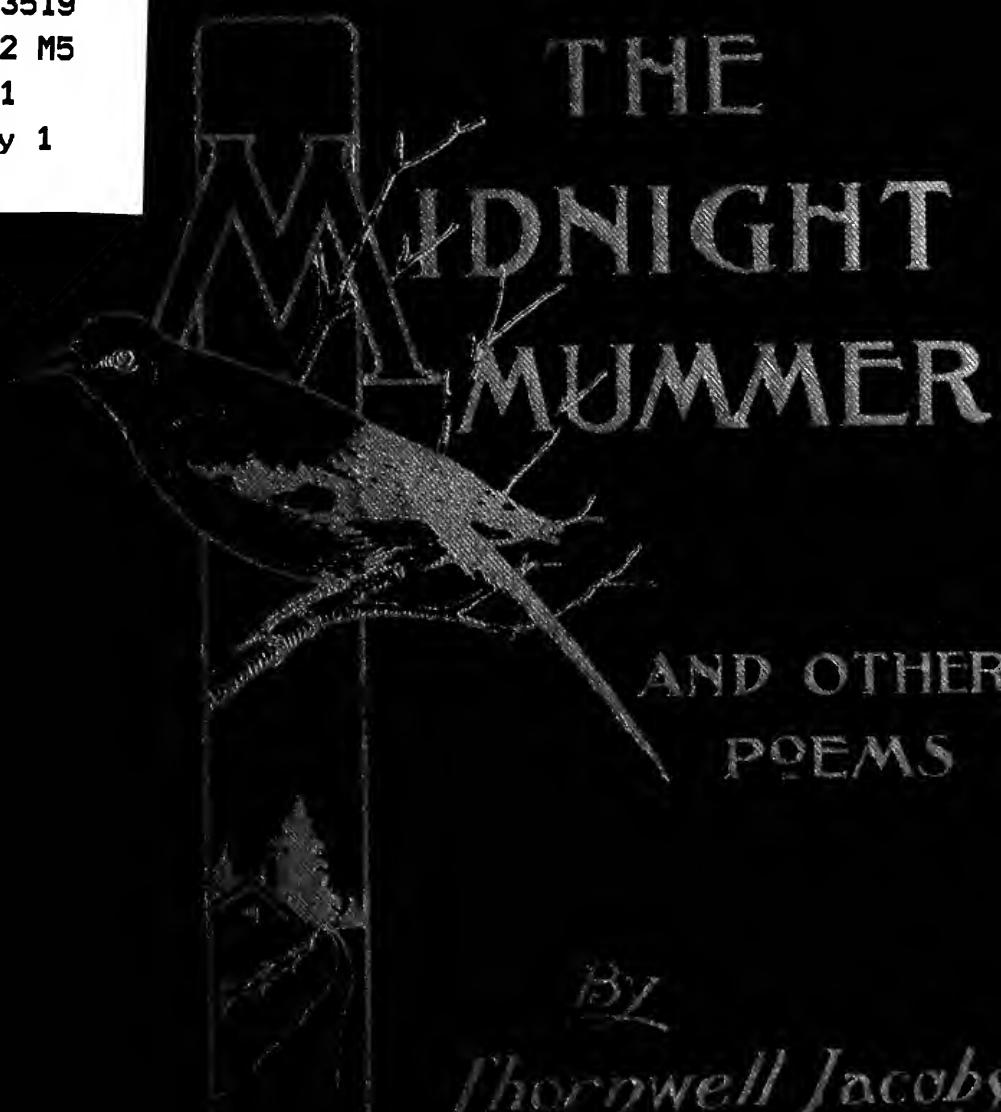


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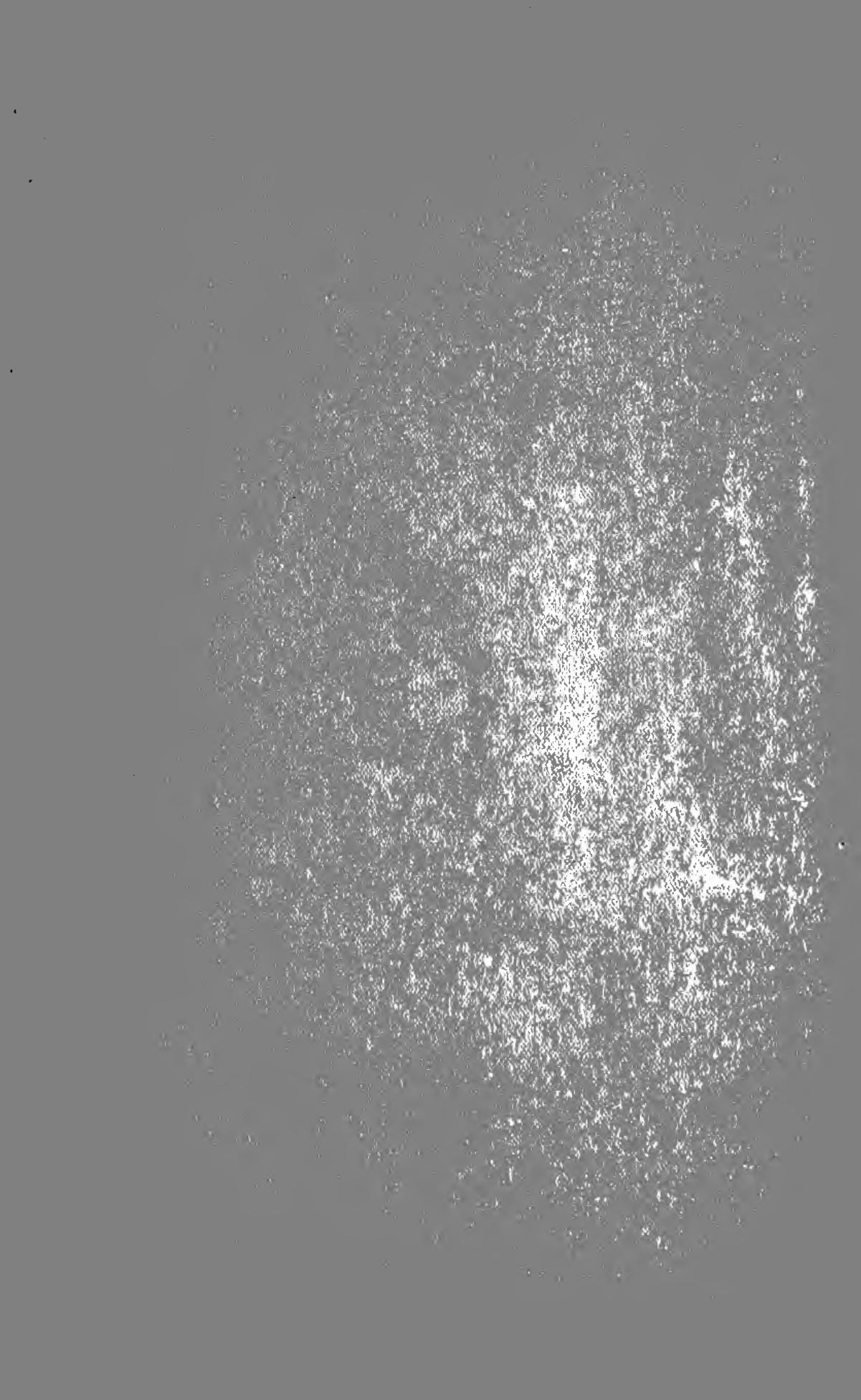


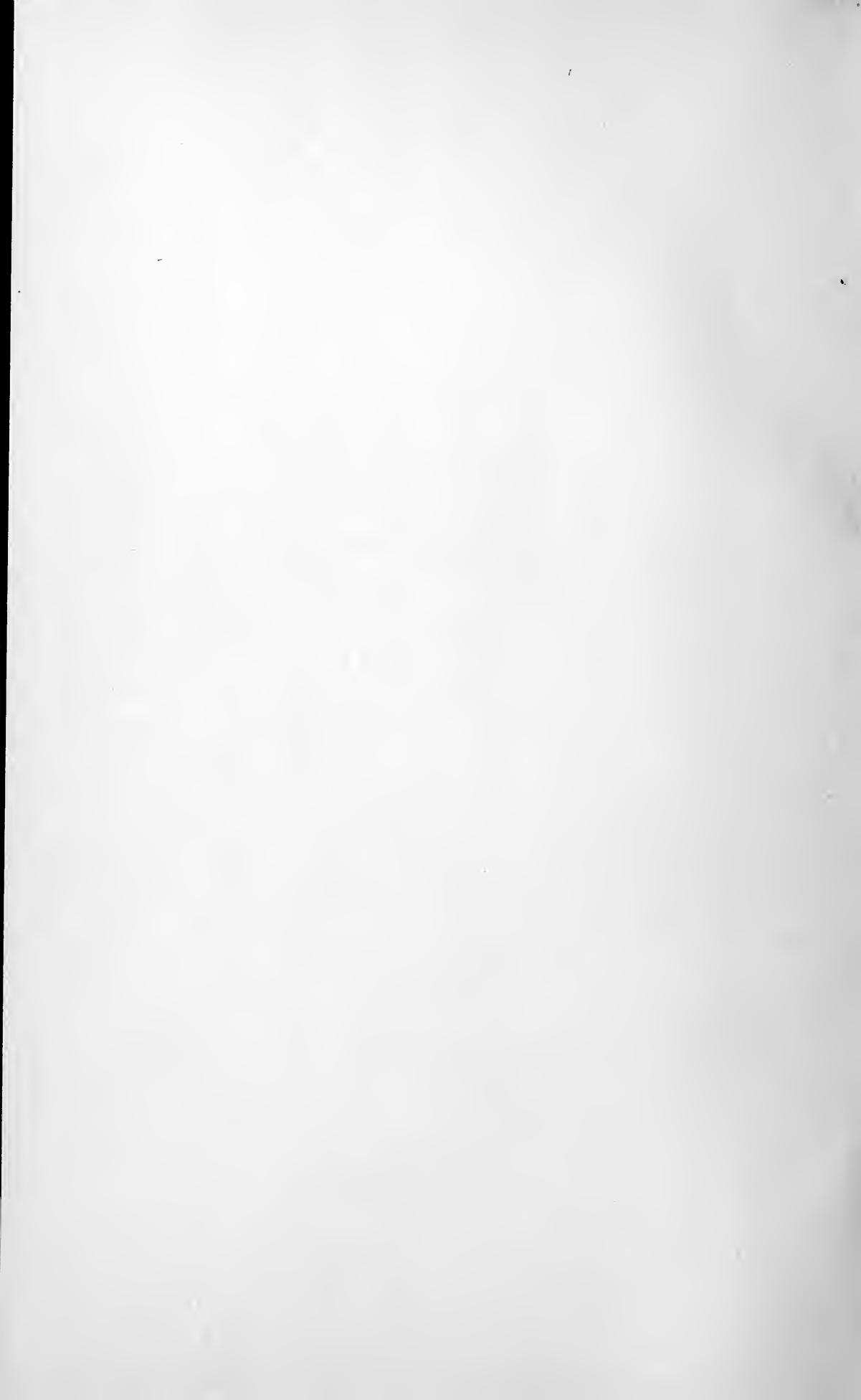
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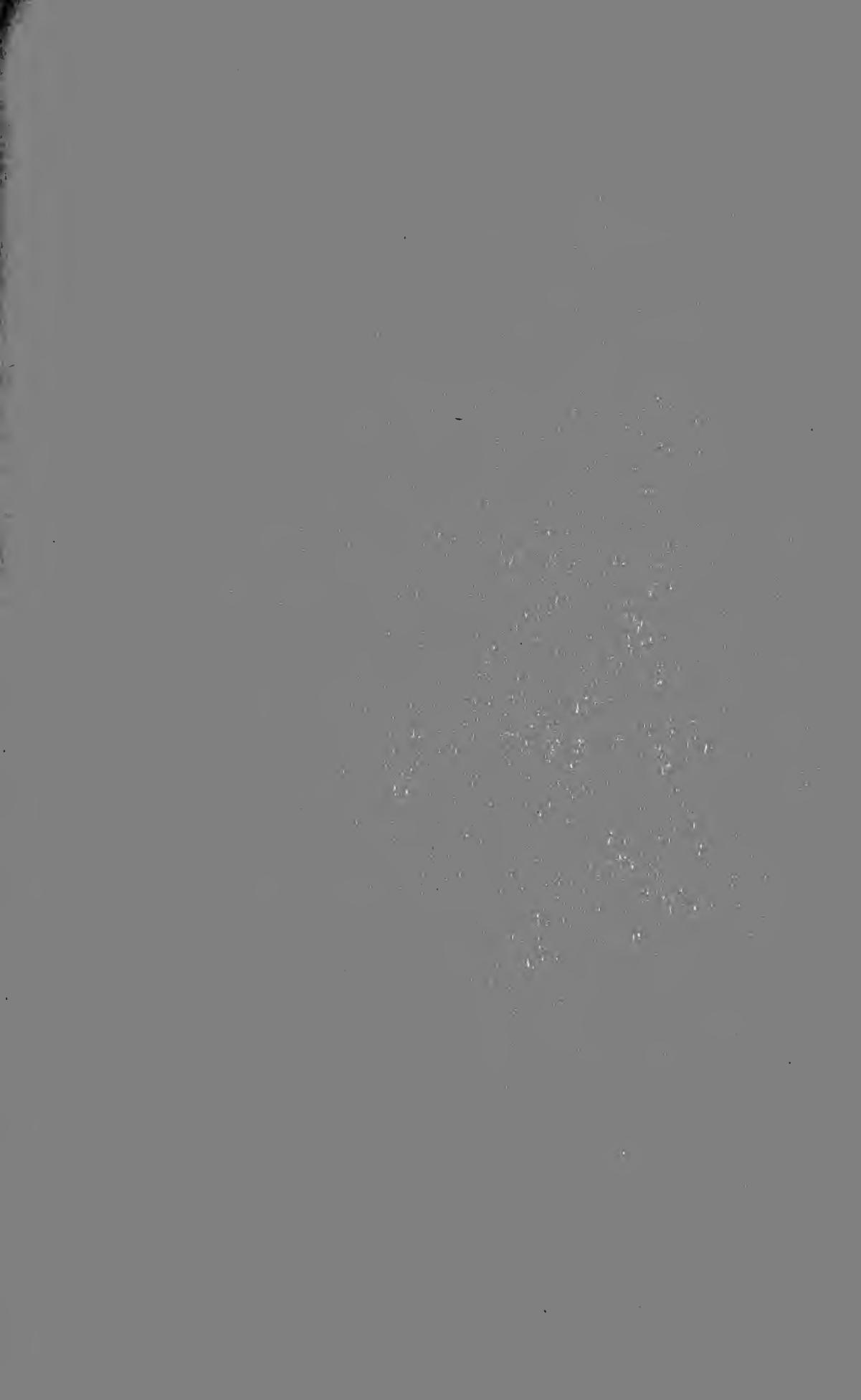
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“THE MIDNIGHT MUMMER”

“Notes they fly by, sigh by, die by
In the Wood.”

THE

MIDNIGHT MUMMER

and Other Poems

BY

THORNWELL JACOBS

*Author of "Sinful Sadday", "The Law of the White Circle",
"The Shadow of Attacoa"*



ATLANTA

The Redbrook Company

1911

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PREFACE

One always thinks he has many things to say in his preface until he sets himself to the task. Then, he finds shockingly few things to say; especially in defense of another volume of poems. Yet even near-poets are not cowards about their verses although they quake at thinking of any one else reading them: for men may see faults they themselves cannot correct. But these men furnish the stepping stones on which some very great singer may mount to an immortal stage; they hold the goal flags beyond which he must go if he is really to say the imperishable thing: and hence may be forgiven all their imperfections. For the spirit whose breath they speed is God's greatest gift to men. What could He plan better for us than the goodly boon of a great man? And to that man, what message could he impart better than a great thought? And, for that thought, what excellence could He desire higher than a great form? And, of great forms of expression of thought, what will compare with the gentle rhythm of musical words? That is why we cherish our poets as well as laugh at their counterfeits. We refuse to let them die. At the head of every national literature we place one of them as premier of all in the fine art of immortalizing thought.

So even the near-poet has his uses and, for the sake of the music he hastens, may ask forgiveness for all his discords. The lute is not broken; it awaits the breath of a master; the master who has his own hour for making music that must last.

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DEDICATION

*To those who seek to see as far and
to those who rejoice that they can see
much farther, this volume is dedicated
by the author, with a miserere for all
those who do not wish to see at all.*

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We are enabled to present herewith specially relevant illustrations of some of the poems through the courtesy of Messrs. Julian Harris and F. V. Davies, of Atlanta, Ga., Dr. J. D. Jacobs, of Clinton, S. C., and Doubleday, Page & Co., of Garden City, N. Y.

FOREWORD

MY PRAYER.

A mercy show me, Lord, before I go,
A boon, since I may never come again—
Whisper one sacred secret in my ear
And bid me tell it to my fellow-men;
A word nor man nor beast did ever hear,
And let me write it for my fellow-men.
O bid me not die—that is my only fear—
Till Thou hast heard my prayer—and then
I go, my Lord, O not till then!

One only gift I ask—I crave it so—
Rich gift, since I shall never come again,
Reveal to me one master mystery
And let me tell it to my fellow-men.
A thing nor man nor beast did ever see,
That I might show it to my fellow-men,
Some thought of Thine that must remembered be
Forever! Lo, I listen, Lord, till then,
Listen for my answer, Lord, till then.

Atlanta, Ga., 1910.

THE MIDNIGHT MUMMER.

The lightning-hearted thunder has withdrawn his awful voice
And the midnight storm is gone,
But the black mist of the terrible, wild passion he employs
Broods in horror o'er the wrecks his breath has blown.
For the death of things is walking in the midnight gloom,
And the end of all things stalking where the shadows loom,
· Tho' the fearful storm is gone.
The bright-eyed stars are sulking behind the veiling clouds,
And all frightful things are skulking in the blackness that enshrouds
The wrecks, when the storm is gone,
The silence, when the storm is gone.

Lo, one doth meet the midnight with a song,
A carol when the night is long,
Clear and sweet and beautiful,
Alone of all the dutiful,
He dares to meet the midnight with a song,
To thrill the mighty midnight with a song.

All the gladness, all the madness of the wood,
All the magic of their music, every mood
Of the melodies they utter,
Trilling cadences they flutter,
Notes they fly by, sigh by, die by in the wood.

Made monarch of the midnight by a song,
On the throne of his despised, rotting prong,
Lilting songs of all the singers,
Master of all music bringers,
In their fearful silence listening to his song,
To their own words bravely uttered in his song.

Hark, the harbinger note from the delicate throat
Of the bluebird who sings as he flies !
And the spring has come with the woodpecker home,
All the flowers have opened their eyes ;
The robins have come to their summertime home,
And the daisies have opened their eyes.

THE MIDNIGHT MUMMER.

"Where the sap-sucker circles the June-apple tree,"
He is singing of thee, of thee!

And the little one hears and in spite of his fears
Is a-tremble in infinite glee.

And the little bird whispers, "O Prince of all Lispers,
Thou singest for me, for me,
In the midnight thou singest for me!"

There whistles a voice from the lush young wheat,
And wings are a-whirr to meet.
All the field is a-flight in the awful midnight,
As he calleth : "Bob-White, Bob-White!"
For the partridge hears afar in the wheat,
And his fluttering heart is abeat, aheat,
As he hears his voice in the night,
His message abroad in the night.

Now over the hills in the vale of the vanished, alas, the great
star dies !

And a thrastle mourns in the valley till the woods refuse his cries,
Pleads lowly in plaintive sally for the life of the star that dies,
Till gently each wood-aisle and alley in tenderness softens his sighs,
Lone wood-aisle and pleached alley, for love of the star that dies.

List, Cardinal Grosbeak, a-flame with his love,
Boasteth loud in the mulberry tree !

"In wildest abandon of deference, Love, I flutter my wing for thee!
What mildest demand on thy preference, Love, may I stutter this
spring in glee?

Beguiled, rest thy hand on no reference, Love, others utter, I sing
ma cherie!"

Thus Cardinal Grosbeak, all red with his love
A-flame in the mulberry tree.

The cherry-lipped robin who loveth the light
Now ringeth the world with joy.
His song of the noonday is heard in the night
With a fervor no fear may alloy;
The faint-hearted robin who listens in fright

THE MIDNIGHT MUMMER.

To the sound of his midday joy,
Echo of his riotous joy.

A part of all the birds whom he has met,
For each in song he pays their midnight debt,
 Till the hermits of the river
 (At the faintest sound a-quiver)
Hear the housetops ringing with their rondolet,
 And the shriekers of the common,
 Catch their voices echoed from on
High, discordant cries to sweetest music set,
 Till the wax-wings are a-flutter
 And the bobolinks in utter
Gladness listen to their secret rondolet,
Madness—listen to their glee-sweet rondolet.

He has sung them their songs the long night thro',
 While his own was a-rest in his heart,
He has sent their sweet messages homeward to new
 Courage give, a new note to impart;
And lo, as he sang the strange urge in him grew
 To unbosom his impassioned heart,
 To sing his own song from his heart.

"O wonderful, wonderful world of God,
 When Thy wonders all are seen;
Ah, beautiful, beautiful universe,
 When Thy beauties all have been;
When all of the thoughts of all of the years
 Have shed their light and gone,
When all of the tears and all of the fears
 With all things felt have flown,
What stage will He set for the play He will get
 When all of His worlds have gone?
When Time and Space have gone?
 What stone to what tinder strike
When suns are cinder-like
 And Life and Love have flown,
When thought and will have gone?

THE MIDNIGHT MUMMER.

What stone to what tinder
With no worlds to hinder
When God is left alone,
In His midnight all alone,
His song in' His heart His own?
Ah blessed is he who the reaper may be
Of the seeds his God hath sown.
Thrice blessed is he who the bearer may be
Of the harvest no hand hath strown.
When the story is penned to the very end,
To the denouement none hath known,
(Save the author, the author alone,)
When the sins of the world, to oblivion hurled,
With oblivion shall atone,
With midnight for their own,
Dead midnight all their own,
What wonderful note from what wonderful throat
With what wonderful impulse blown,—
In the ultimate darkness blown,—
Shall He strike for what audience in what strange gaudience
Shining where none hath shone?
Shall He strike for what listeners to what new bliss in airs
Never by mortals known?
What new light then shall He be for what strange eyes to see,
Shining where stars where strown?
Alight and above, alone!

O Thou Vast Midnight of God, hear this song of the sod
And forget not my prayer in thine own,
My prayer for the Dawn, in thine own,
My song in my midnight—alone."

Comes the hour when the blackness quails before the Morning Star
And the Old Moon's mellow grace,
Red-litten by a strange Earth-shine, a comrade's love from far,
A-glow, unconscious, on his fellow's face,
In his own midnight on his fellow's face.

And he who met the Darkness with a song
And counted it a harbinger of noon

THE MIDNIGHT MUMMER.

Is crowned with glory on his rotting prong,
 Unsaddened by the low, senescent moon,
 Unmaddened by the dull, decrescent moon,
 For a star proclaims a coming—coming, soon.

A robin is waking his mate,
 For the east is aflush with the Dawn,
And a Jenny-wren twitters, "'Tis late, 'tis late,
 Haste, the bugs are abroad on the lawn!"
And the flicker peeps out from the hole where he stayed
 With a "rat-a-tat-tat, Wake up, who's afraid?"
(Tho the hollow was deep where he stayed)
 So the Jay-bird screams: "Lo, the first sun-beams,
 And no-evil, no-evil, how nice the sun seems,
My, but didn't it blow where I stayed!"
 And the cat-bird opens her fearful eyes
 With a plaintive: "I knew that the sun would rise!
 What a noise that mocking bird made:
 What an outrageous noise he made!"

But, anon, in the shadowed valley, a reverent veery wakes,
A-thrill with the vision-music the Master Mummer makes—
A-fill with Hermisian music, in vaster summer brakes,—
The sweeter, meeter music by far Elysian lakes.
And the silent bush and the swaying rush are a-dream of the won-
derland
To one fair bird who, listening, heard the song of the ultra-band.
And the tones of his tongue are tender and softer his steps on the
sand,
That a thrush in the hush of the trackless brush should hearken and
understand,
One, wise in the wisdom of midnight, of many, could understand.
Atlanta, Ga., Spring of 1910.

BABY'S EASTER.

So sleepy—oh, so sleepy, he,
For mother's arms are warm,
And Mother's baby blinks so snug,
 So safe from Bogie's harm—
And wakes to laugh at one who loves
 To love his little form.
So sleepy—oh, so sleepy, he,
 Oh, none so sleepy is;
His little smiles are tired, too,
 And beg for coming bliss,
Until his father bendeth low
 And wakes them with a kiss.

So fevered—oh, so fevered, he,
 So low his little moan,
O baby's tiny, burning brow,
 O mother's deathened groan,
O guardian angel bending down,
 Save thou, he is thine own!
No whitened hand clutched piteously,
 No brow so hot as his;
And little lips are moveless now
 Where baby's din-din is,
Until his Father bendeth low
 And wakes them with a kiss.

Clinton, S. C., 1904.

THE COMET.

With face ever full on thy King,
Thy tresses alight with His love,
Thou comest, O Queen, O Fair,
From the regions where mysteries move,
From the land of the whispered word,
Where the voice of thy Lord is low,
The voice of thy wonderful, wonderful Lord
Is low—low—low.

Back to the family hearth,
To the charm of thy Master's light,
Though it faded away in thine ultimate gloom
As a candle sinks in the night,
But still His word was abroad
And the tone thereof compelled,
The tone of thy masterful, masterful Lord
Compelled, compelled.

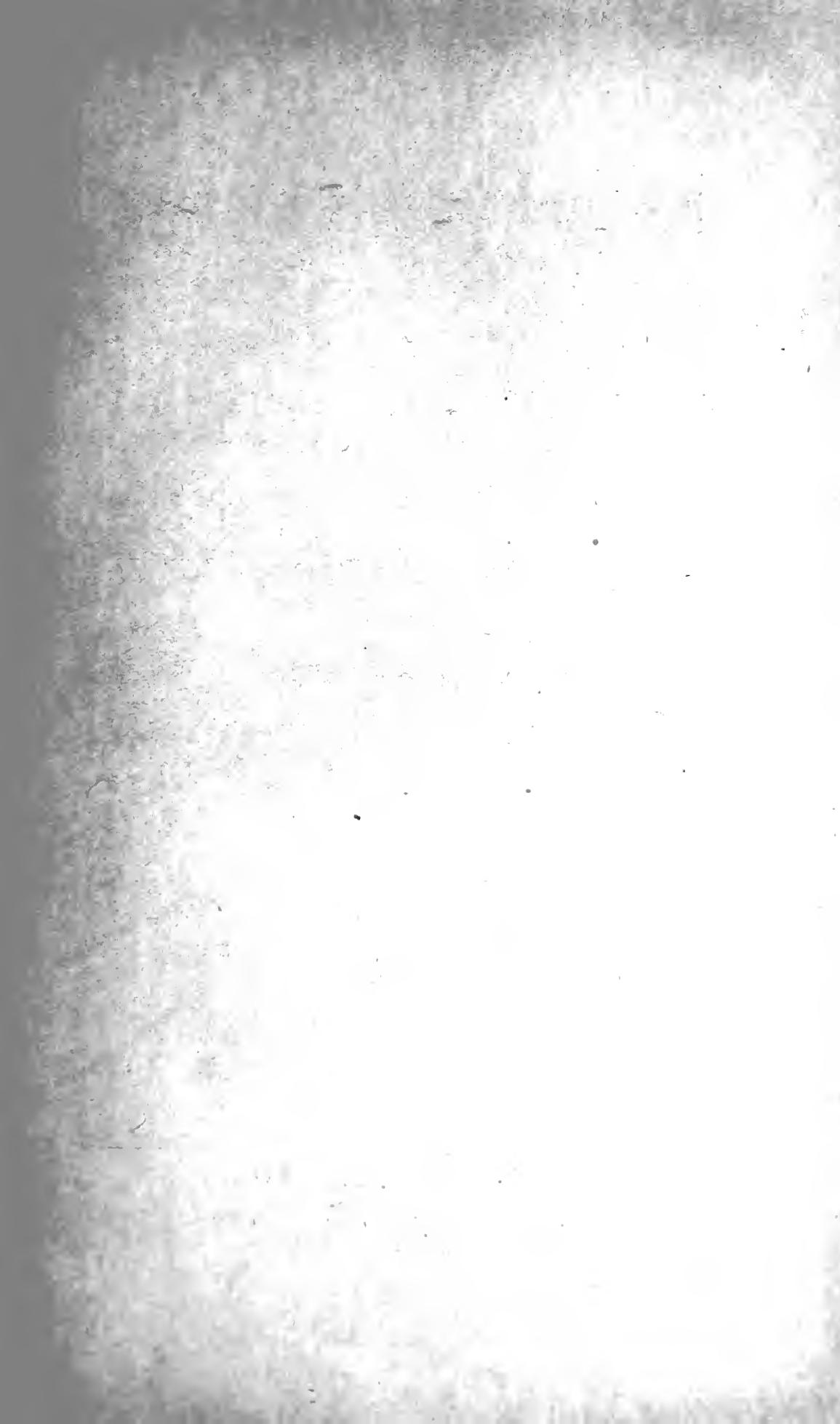
In companionless silences found,
From the lure of the Far Country free,
(Though never so far but the thought of thy home
Could follow and master thee),
When the time to return had come
The path to thy Lord grew plain,
The path to thy summoning, summoning Lord
Grew plain, grew plain.

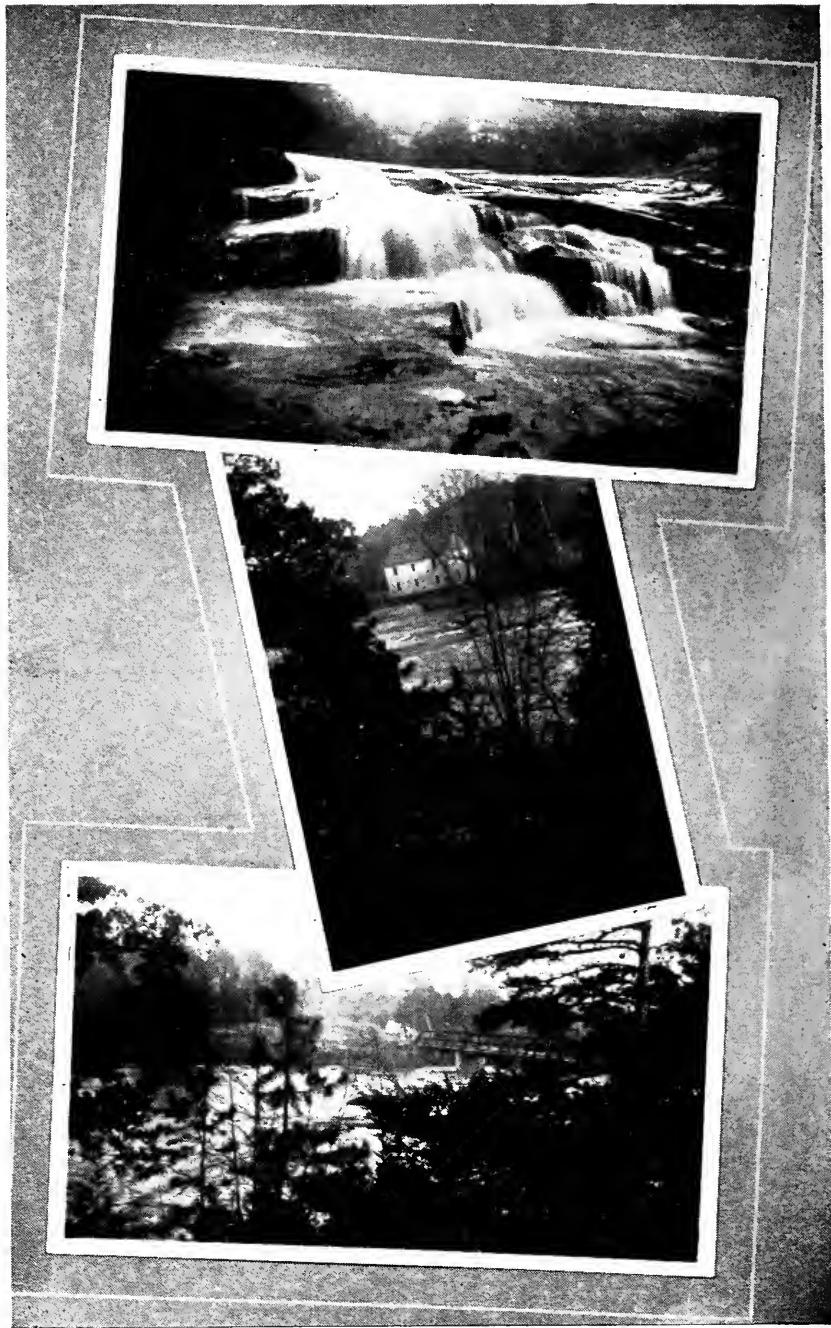
Was the song of thy sisters sweet
As they circled the common light,
And the fleckless eye of thy lover clear
As he searched thee out in the night?
Afar in the bosom of Gloom—
Yet the eye of thy Lord was there,
The eye of thy beautiful, beautiful Lord
Was there, was there!

THE COMET.

In the unneighbored wastes of God,
O waif from the wilderness come,
Told any to thee of the Thither-land
Where worlds are wandering home?
The ultimate goal of the years
Which the will of thy Lord hath prepared,
The will of thy hastening, hastening Lord
Hath prepared, prepared?

Atlanta, Ga., 1910.





“BEYOND THE FALLS”

“And then beyond the Mill, the Bridge, and then—
The Land to which He calls!”

BEYOND THE FALLS.

Beyond the village limits, woods and muscadines,
Beyond the woods the long, red, pine-topped hills!
Beyond the hills the ancient roadway winds
 Its way in leisured peace to Musgrove Mills.
Beyond the mills—the river, Horse-shoe Falls,
 Beyond the Falls—ah, they who stood with me,
In utter wonder ceased from boyish brawls,
 Awed by the fleeing road that none could see
The end of, felt the wondrous thralls
 Of luring mystery,
And pondered whither led, beyond the falls,
 The road to Enoree.

O sandy, muddy way, outstretched before the wheel,
 O'er-topping mountains for a goal to be,
Bridging each chasm with thy stone and steel,
 Leaping each turgid stream, to onward flee,
O road so dear, so wise, can none delay,
 Can none turn back the impulse of thy soul?
Is this the weighty message thou wouldest say
 To those who weakly quake at unseen goal?
To those who cannot hear the voice that calls
 From mystic ecstasy,
And lures thee, unsuspecting, on beyond the falls,
 Beyond the Enoree!

O silent road for loads of many lands,
 Thou dost alike to foe and comrade give,
Whose crumbling homes have mingled with thy sands,
 Whose names have come and gone while thou dost live.
O thou left comradeless by time's fell blows,
 Dost gently hasten to thine ancient friends—
Old Enoree, who ever onward flows,
 And Horse-shoe Falls who never, never ends—
And on beyond, into the Mystic Land,
 The land to which He calls,
And on—O bearer of the quick and dead,
 Whither—beyond the falls?

BEYOND THE FALLS.

Speak of the woods that darken, here, my way,
Thou dear, old, memoried road to Enoree.
Interpret to my heart the wondrous play
Of wisdom on the path One builds for me.
Tell of the bridging of a thousand streams,
The passing of the mountains, undelayed,
Of bird-thronged meadows, spread for him who dreamis,
The River, waiting, when the end is made,
And then, beyond the Mill, the Bridge, and then—
 The Land to which He calls—
Whither, O Builder of the Ways of Men,
 Whither—beyond the Falls?

Nashville, Tenn., 1908.

MISERERE.

Jehovah, God of Sabaoth, Preparer of Columbia's place,
Who of thy peoples, ever doth find chiefest favor in thy face,
Ascended to thy Holy Hill, behold thy chosen of thy grace.

Thou long-rememb'ring God who brought our fathers in the teeth
of storm,

Thy terror-tutored, billow-taught, thy faithful, fettered to thy form,
In love-led liberty; thine own in famished anguish, thine alone:

O call us back to that dear time of sweated brow, of earthen bowl,
While yet the law forbade our crime, contemned not as im-potent
role,

The hour when Justice claimed the part lest Mercy terrorize the
whole.

Ah, give us back our honest want with safety from the bribed suit;
Our graftless trees with honor gaunt and guiltless of forbidden
fruit;

Homes unadorned, all beautiful with virtue, swept of Achan's loot.

Unloosed of Law, sleek-fed by Fate, we multiply our countless slain,
Crime, pardoned, mocks the palsied State, unmindful of thy brand
of Cain.

A godless folk, save only Greed, unmastered save by Gain.

Alone, of all thy breeds, we o'erturn thine altars, ignorant of Fear,
Alone, of all thy chosen, burn our fellows in the curse-red air,
Alone preserve for future boast their charred bones, their clotted
hair.

What nation, Lord, that thou hast known hath waxen fat upon thy
gifts,

In boundless bounty, giant-grown, upon thy Holy Hill who lifts
Such gory hands as we to him whose sieve the failing peoples sifts?

Once manlier winnings in the wood, past purer harvests of the field,
Lost cottage, redolent of good, with valor floored, with rev'rence
cieled,

Recallest these, and art thou wroth, Jehovah, God of Sabaoth?

MISERERE.

If yet within thy heart may burn a passion for thy blood-red ones—
Sin-offerings demi-gods would spurn, accepted of thy murd'rous
sons,—

No first-born claim from king to cot, O One-time Judge, long since
forgot.

Atlanta, Ga., 1910.

A BOY TO HIS MOTHER.

Unknown, ideal, unseen mother,
Whom I love though I have known not,
Whom I worship unremembered,

Sacred are the words they tell me of thy love and thy devotion,
Sacred are the thoughts they bring me, of thee, sweetest of all
mothers.

Sacred too, shall be this picture, given by thine oldest brother
To the youngest of thy children. Guarded by the watchful tiger,
May it keep its vigils o'er me. Mingled with the black and orange,
Woven by a sister's fingers, may its soul-transforming influence
Change the hand that rests upon it, light the eyes that burn be-
holding,

Purify the heart adoring, change them as they come to worship,
Make them like their sainted mother, make them like her Holy
Master.

I have heard the sweet musician of the wildwood as he lingers
'Neath the cool and shady bowers, I have heard his notes ecstatic
As he rises slowly upward, and the wood-fowl, hushed in wonder,
Listened with me to the music; heard and sought to find the singer,
As his notes were growing softer, sweeter, purer, while he mounted
To the starlit Empyrean, and the echoes, soft returning
Moved my heart in sweetest measure, lifted up my eyes to heaven;
Till I saw the exultant singer slowly melting in the vision
Of the far blue deep above me.

So I listen to the music of my unknown, unseen mother,
Music of a life-stream murmuring to its bed of love and duty;
Notes of joy when in the sunshine danced the wavelets on its sur-
face,
Mingled voice of hope and courage when beneath the darkening
shadows
Gather now the troubled waters. Till the current, rich in power,
Sweeps once more into the sunlight, gently soothes the bickering
shallows,
Passes onward to the ocean of the everlasting future,
And the earth's last wooden glory marks the resurrection morning.

A BOY TO HIS MOTHER.

..

Passing precious such life music, for it lifts the eyes far upward
Till they view the singer resting in the bosom of the heavens,
Melting in the hidden glory, resting on the Master's bosom.

Deep in reverie at evening, gazing at the unbottomed heavens,
I have sat with eyes unconscious of the beauteous, starlit meadows,
Heeding not the zephyr kisses nor their odors rich, fresh gathered,
Won in deepest secret from the sweetest of the trembling lilies;
Hearing not the merry voices from the honey-suckle bowers,
Thought unconscious, heart deep dreaming, till the stars had veiled
their glory,

Till the zephyrs passed offended and the voices died in silence,
Till I woke and quickly summoned to my side the passed sensations,
Caught the accents of the voices, felt the gentle zephyr kisses,
Saw the beauty of the flowers in the Father's heaven meadow,
Heard and saw and felt the better for the silence and the stillness,
For the darkness of the heavens.

So these eyes that saw unconscious thee, the sweetest of all mothers,
And these lips that felt the kisses dearer far than any others.
And these ears that heard, unheeding, baby lullabys angelic;
In the future shall awaken, shall not ever sleep in darkness.
When the tumult of life's passions and the babel of its voices
Shall have died away forever, and my soul is left in quiet;
When my eyes have seen sufficient of life's evanescent drama
And my heart is satiated with its never satisfying
Gifts and never answered callings, blasted hopes and withered plea-
sures,

When the roar and din and clamor shall have passed away forever,—
In the silence of that darkness scenes long gone shall re-enlighten,
I shall see thee as thou bendedst o'er the cradle of my childhood,
I shall feel thy warm love kisses when I rested on thy bosom,
I shall hear the voice that lulled my baby-soul to sweetest slumber.
Earthly form and earthly voice and earthly lips I shall remember.
In the silence of the Sunset
In the darkness of the Evening.

Clinton, S. C., 1895.

HE TRAVELS ON.

This is the time to kiss the light,
Now—it is day.
This is the time to speak the word
You'll sometime say:
To smooth it out—he soon is gone,
Say now the word—he travels on.

This is the time to draw the thorn
Most gently out,
Now, while he still may tremble on,
Still get about.
It stings today and he is here:
Tomorrow—look thou on his bier.

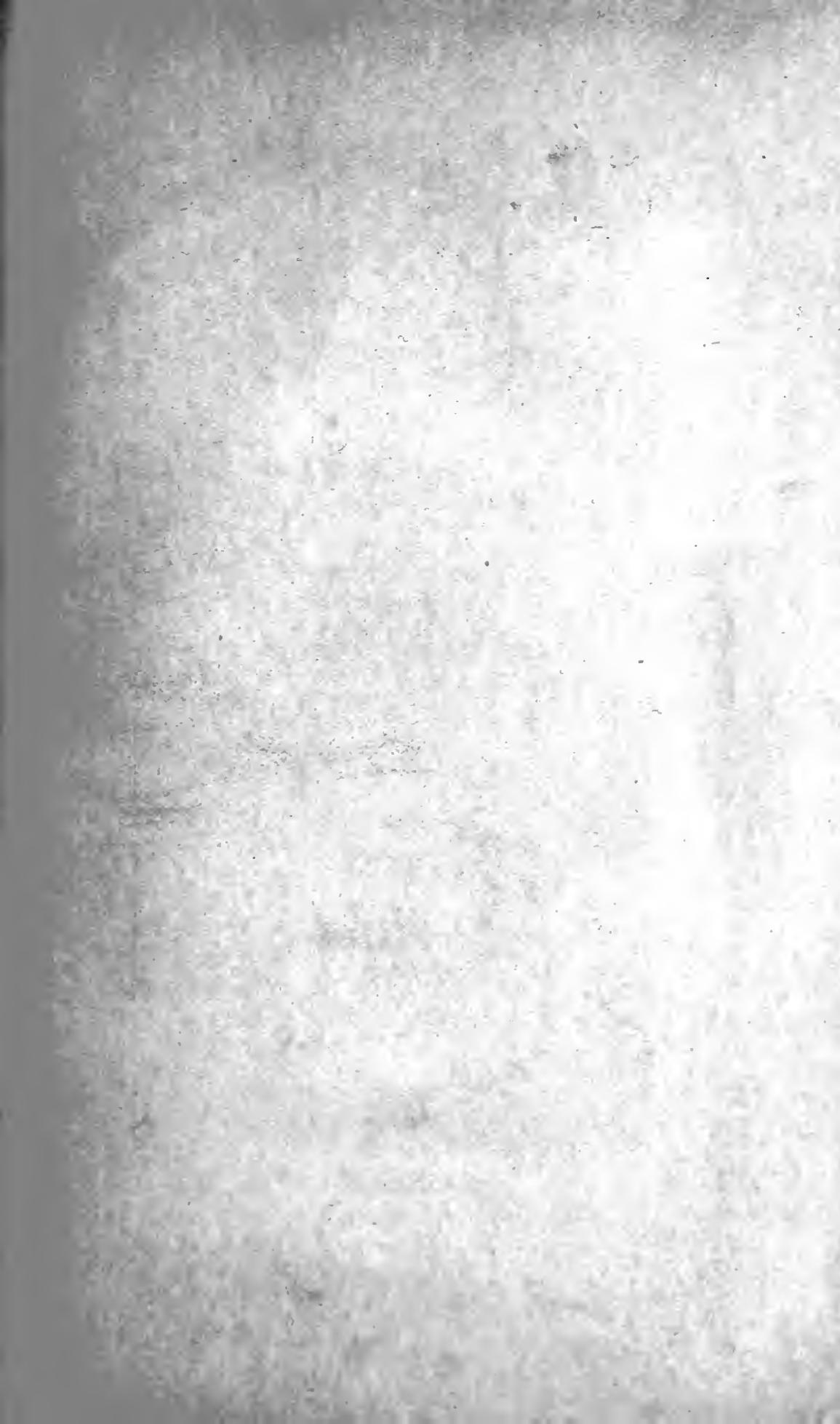
E'en now he needs must thank you
Tremblingly
And foolish tears o'erflow the eyes
That used to see.
Make glad his heart, he'll soon be gone;
Speak now the word—he travels on.

Clinton, S. C., 1905.

OPPORTUNITY.

Fleet king of humankind I run each course
Of earth until the race is done. Nor is
It given me to wait by any gate
Nor once to pause at any door. Didst see
The Dim One, he who ran before thee in
Thy darkness? Knewest not whether friend to aid
Or foe who would prevent thee at thy goal,
Was near? 'Twas I, who follow one man e'er
And in advance of other runners go.
Didst hear low tones, as if one urged thee to
Thy right, yet closedst fast thine eyes and stoppedst
Thine ears so siren-like they were and full
Of sweet persuading? It was I, who still
Before thee was when thou hadst turned thy left.

Once thou didst pause and notedst well the prints
Of some who ran in haste lest they should lose
The long sought gold—at rainbow's tip, and yet
Didst turn thee to another way? Th' were mine,
Thine opportunity's. And those of many
Another man who pressed me sore and grasped
Me at the parting of the ways. Thou then
Didst fail to follow. Now, O Deedless One,
Thou must precede me to thy fate, nor canst
Thou ever reach to front for better choice.
What time I ran before thou graspedst not,
Untouched now I follow thee to God.
Clinton, S. C., 1904.





“SQUARE ROUND”

“The meadowed landscape, lush with life,
Bends low at Death’s dark portal.”

SQUARE ROUND!

The wind is whistling to the trees,
 His dirge of winter coming,
The robins all have southward flown;
 The bees have holed their humming.
Square round! and let us closer be,
 And warm to cheery spirit.
The good we each in other see
 The more that we sit near it.

The dew has whitened o'er the field
 Of flowers the veery sings of.
His flood of joy the snow has sealed,
 The No which winter stings of.
Then come, let's gather round the fire,
 Nor lose one mellowed minute.
Though darkness and the rain's without,
 No matter, we're not in it!

The meadowed landscape, lush with life,
 Bends low at death's dark portal.
Each seared leaf that feels the knife
 Reminds us we are mortal.
Square round! and we will closer be,
 We'll warm our wintry spirit.
For darkness, we'll cheer up the blaze,
 The rain! why should we hear it!

Blue aster, last to Lethe led,
 Restores to Heaven her color.
The gloomy hall of Sheol's dead
 Each year is growing fuller.
Who knows how soon will come the day
 When we will help to fill it?
Thy heart beats strong each systole?
 An hour strikes to still it!

SQUARE ROUND.

Square round! let's all get near the fire
And warm our wintry spirit.
For darkness? Roll a new back-log!
The rain? We will not hear it!

Clinton, S. C., 1890.

THINE HOUR SHALL COME.

The waiting soul is sick for work to be;
The eye looks languid at slow-passing days;
The heart beats wearily each systole,
And frets at opportunity's delayed pace.

Yet fill, O Soul, with hope Thy faithless gloom,
For to thee, hoping not, Thine hour shall come.

Thou longest for the sweatings of the race
And for the burdens that must needs be borne?
Thou understandest not the toiling pace
Of moments that prepare thee for the crown.
So fill, O Soul, with hope thy faithless gloom,
For all too soon at last Thine hour shall come.

Clinton, S. C., 1905.

THE FIRST DAY.

"And the evening and the morning were the first day."

On an ocean's bosom bright and blue,
 In a land not far away,
A beautiful ship with a joyous crew
 Was gliding peacefully,
And afar to the prow, under cloudless skies,
 As they bounded away from the shore,
Stood a strong, young lad with glistening eyes,
 Ever eagerly looking before.

No tears were there nor were wont to be,
 Nor sorrowful, heaving breast;
No sigh for the home he would long to see,
 Where oft he would long to rest!
For he thought of the heaven, bright and blue,
 Of the ocean, wild and free,
And he thought of the ship so staunch and true,
 And he dreamed of the untried sea.

O'er the treacherous ocean's heaving blue
 Near a land in the faraway,
A shattered ship with a shattered crew
 Was seeking a friendly bay.
And afar to the stern as the clouds gathered fast,
 And the breakers began to roar,
Bent a shattered man with his eyes on the past
 Dreaming of childhood's shore.

And bitter tears there fell unseen,
 And there was the heaving breast,
And the sigh for the home where he might have been,
 Where nevermore he would rest.
For he thought of the howling wintry blast,
 And he thought of the raging sea;
And he longed for an harbor where storms are past,
 The harbor where soon he would be.

Clinton, S. C., 1896.

A SONG OF A WRONG.

My sweetheart came in the springtime
As the dearest of Loves oft do,
And she gave me a song when the day was long,
And she said, "I am true! I am true!"
And she said, "Have you heard of Love, my lad?
Of the waters the dreamers drink?
Come, taste of rest on a sweetheart's breast
And lean o'er the crystal brink,
The leering, luring brink,
The brink where the dream-drunk drink!"
Then the hours sped happily, happily on,
The moments sang merrily by,
And she showed me the Deep where the passions sleep
Till she comes and they wake, and the passions leap!
For very love they leap!
And she showed me the sky where ambitions fly
Till she leaves and they falter, they quiver, they die!
For very love they die!
The passions—she came and the passions leapt!
Ambitions—she left and ambitions slept!
When she left me alone to die.
When she said (for believing the day grew dark)
"I will never come back again!"
Grew black with quenching each lone hope-spark
When she left me alone in my pain,
Alone, alone in my pain!

But my love came back in the springtime,
(On the Eastertide as before)
And she gave me her hand in a lonely land ,
And she said: "We will part nevermore!"
And she said: "Take me back and my love shall not lack
Take me back, take me back, I implore!"
Then my arms were around her, my heart in her hands,
My form at her feet as of yore—
My form at her feet, my heart at her feet,
My soul at her feet as of yore—

A SONG OF A WRONG.

For my life is my love's—Evermore!

Then the hours sped happily, happily on
And the moments sang merrily by,

And she showed me the Deep where the passions sleep
Till she comes and they wake and the passions leap!

For very love they leap!

And she showed me the sky where ambitions fly

Till she leaves and they falter, they quiver, they die!

For very love they die!

But love will come and love will go

Though every heartstring sever,

But oh, the pain when you love them so
And must love on forever!

For my Love came back in the springtime

(At the Eastertide as of yore)

And she gave me a blow in the Easter-glow

And she said: "I can love no more!"

A blow in the Deep (where the passions sleep),

When she said: "I will love no more!"

With unfaithful fist—(E'en the fickle winds hissed!)

And the changing moon laughed as they hissed, as they hissed),
When she said: "I will love no more!"

And he cried: "More faithful to every bride

Am I than a woman I know!

Than a heartless hunk I know!"

Now this is the song and this is the wrong

Of a man whose heart was broken

By a love who sought and a love who brought

To him Truth's every token,

To him who heard of plighted word

Each pledge, each vow thrice spoken,

To him and God who bent and heard

Each vow, each oath thrice spoken.

Yet love will come and love will go

Though every heartstring sever!

But oh, the pain when you love them so!

And must love on forever!

Morganton, N. C., 1902.

DESERTED.

I am longing, ever longing for the light,
For the land where God's great, golden glory rolls:
I am longing for the ending of the night,
For the land where Death's eternal death-knell tolls.
Longing for the dawning light,
Longing for the dying night,
But the hand upon her silent heart is His who knows no right.

I am working, ever working toward the light,
Ever dreaming of her coming as of old,
Looking westward, and I hail with rare delight
Th' expiring Day-King's freighted breaths of dusty gold—
Dying breaths of dusty light,
Whispers of his hopeless flight,
Fleeing frightened to my soul whose love-flames mock the deep-
ening night.

I am watching, ever watching for the light,
Ever jealous for the hand the angels hold,
Looking eastward where I see her glances bright,
Where approaching footsteps fall on clouds of gold—
Lost, and in the deepening night!
Lonely in the laughing light,
Listening for the soft death-rustle of the dark winged angels'
flight.

I am waiting, ever waiting for the light,
For Jehovah's flame she gently bore away
When she left me for the West-gate, now the night
In a darkened soul strives to beget the day—
Listening for the angel's flight,
Shivering in the lonely night,
Waiting for the Dawn to come and with it—with it, Love and
Light!

Morganton, N. C., 1901.

THE LITTLE MAID OF MU.

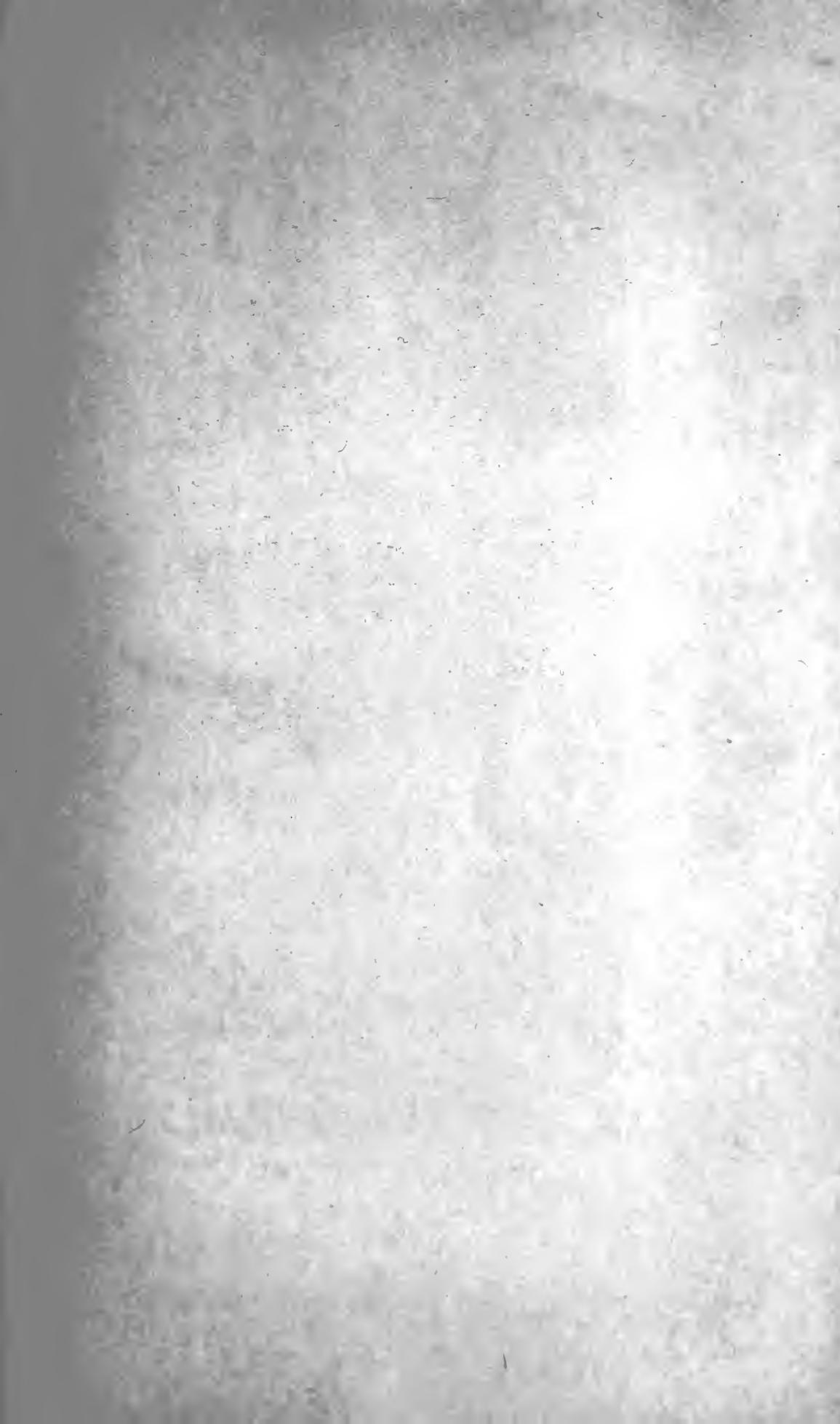
Raise ye high the glasses, brothers,
Mix your life-blood with the wine,
And drink with lips red-wrought of love
And fellowship divine.
Drink to the little maid of Mu
Whose heart is wholly thine.
Her mem'ry be forever blest,
The little maid of Mu,
Who pleads with us to toil and trust
And deeds of love to do.

Then here's to Him who lives and loves,
All hail, thou Lord of Mu.
Here's to thy sword that flashes bright
In gleams of glimmering blue,
Here's to her heart, love-taught of God,
As His bright sword, so true.
Hark, how the glasses join in joy,
Clinking right merrily—
No silent tongue, no hollow word
Of insincerity!

When He shall lift the veil before,
The last great Master-Pi,
Who loved his brothers well so that
For them his soul must die,
Who loves his brothers still as doth
The Father-God on high—
There'll be no happier heart in heaven—
With joy thrilled through and through—
Than thine to whom His love has given
The little maid of Mu.

Dedicated to the Sisters of Mu chapter and written at the request
of the Brothers, for the Annual Banquet.

Clinton, S. C., 1893.





"THE SONG OF THE RAIN"

"We follow the tug that takes no rest,
We feel for the ultimate goal."

THE SONG OF THE RAIN.

"From the uppermost lips of the star-kissed sky,
 From the outermost tips of her gown,
We follow the will that tells not why
 We fall forever down—
We drift, we mist, we drop, we pour, we dart—
She calls, she draws, she hurls us to her heart!

To the innermost depths of her lightless breast,
 To the uttermost core of her soul,
We follow the tug that takes no rest,
 We feel for the ultimate goal.
And when we fail:—"Tis a river's crest,
 And a flood to the sea doth roll.
We drift, we mist, we hear, we storm, we start,
She calls, she draws, she hurls us to her heart!

Our eyes are set toward the center of things,
 To the rock wherein we die,
Tho we linger long while the veery sings
 By the deeps where the brook-trout lie,
And we lend ourselves to cows and kings,
 Till the river bed is dry.
Till we die in her breast where the last heat clings
 With the ocean bed left dry.
Till mist and cloud and thunderstorm are part
Of her who draws, who hurls them to her heart."

Ten thousand times ten thousand times!
 O urgent song of the rain
From all the skies of all the climes
 Go, seek thy goal again!
Go find her heart—and all the chimes,
 Of Earth in dust are lain.
Go chill her breast and all the mimes,
 Of Earth with sleep are slain.
Lost in her breast! Lo, all the rhymes,

THE SONG OF THE RAIN.

Of earthly bliss are vain!
Her sad, unceasing requiem thou art,
Who calls, who draws, who hurls you to her heart.

And when thy last drop oozes through
The chill of her crystalline breast.
Her Love, with a passionate crash, shall woo
His mate, in white hot zest.
And the will of the flame shall call thee to
Another age-long quest:—
The will of the flame of the crash of the two
Thy drops from the stones shall wrest.
You rise, you mist, you hear, you storm, you start,
She calls, she draws, she hurls you to her heart.

Atlanta, Ga., 1910.

FRAGMENTS.

Lo, they who lash themselves to bring to pass
Events, as they who dream o'er emptied glass,
Alike must wait upon the word of him
Who, never hurried, never cries "Alas."

Yet, he who bides for fabled alchemist
To turn his earth to gold or on the fist
Of Vulcan for his statue this should know:—
Business revives when strives th' revivalist.

And he who would the eternal word indite
Or stay the immortal saying in its flight,
Must breathless hear the breathing of that Voice,
Which no man heareth oft nor oft aright.

The Voice that in the feathered lute entralls,
The Voice that from the golden West-gate falls
And in the stormings of the starless night
Doth murmur at the pines—He calls—He calls!

Who o'er the past belated oil is burning
And for much pain a little wisdom earning
Yet needeth this to read! Far more of learning
Lives and throbs in life than life in learning.

O, why attempt his ways to understand
Who sees beyond the prize our hearts demand?
The weed thrives, noxious, in the father's yard
Whose dying child appeals with outstretched hand.

No room in all God's Universe of things
For one more little boy—the robin rings
The world with joy, the while the baby hears
The fated rustling of the darkened wings.

FRAGMENTS.

No moments left, and He the King of all!
No bribe of love or duty to recall
A little while! Yet, aeons come and go
For rat and reptile: His the dreaded pall.

Ah! Who can say how far the mother's cry
From anguished heart doth penetrate the sky,
How gently from his throne beyond all sense,
A Father stoopeth lest a child should die?

A few more steps! Ah, this the wondrous stone
With which a thousand battles have been won,
The rounding of a hill, a corner turned
And lo, the world is changed, the darkness gone!

And when the grape her word of praise doth say,
How sweet oblivion sorrow doth allay,
Be this my prayer: "Take all my joy, O God,
Take all my store, but not my pain away."

My pain, that doth alone my fault indict,
Alone, unbribed, warn of impending night,
Alone, of many boasted sages, know
The face of treacherous wrong and faithful right.

For once within a House of Him most High,
I heard his preacher thus in fervor cry:
"So just and gentle in his love for thee
His heart is pained at thy slightest sigh.

"Nor sin nor pain are of his plan a part
Nor widow's weeds nor mother's anguished heart,
Nor may he blamed be for wrong and tears
More than the wheelwright for the broken cart."

FRAGMENTS.

So toward the field this easy creed to try
I fared and lo, at coiled snake a cry
From mother-bird bereaved of her young
Who, dainty morsels for the monster, die!

And if this answer none doth dare to make,
Which on his Lord would cast the dread mistake,
Let none reply to him, who thus blasphemers :—
“Who made the cat-bird’s young and who the snake?”

Musing beside a mighty press we stood,
Where printed was the tale of earth’s sad brood
With poisoned ink-mass! Yet the types were clear
And they who caught the meaning called it good.

Thus long ago my answer I did drink
From law and chance and wisdom, link and link
Could e’en a God write out the tale of earth
Without his poisoned pot of needful ink?

Some to past marvels of Jehovah bow,
Some tell of glories hastening to his brow
But of the dreamers who awake to say
What song the Rock of Ages singeth now!

Nashville, Tenn., Atlanta, Ga., 1905-10.

THE DREAM OF THE RIVER.

Attacoa! mount so near the heavens that the starry throng
Rest upon thy craggy bosom, weary when their watch is long;
Yet so earthly that thy pale-cheeked laurels come when darkness set-
tles,
Steal my little maiden's blush to copy in their creamy petals:

List, O thou who wear'st the golden mantles of the dying sun,
Of the pure Tarquoee maidens hast thou seen the fairest one?
Lingers she in all thy valleys? Is she waiting for me there
Where to die upon her bosom is the kneeling violet's prayer?

Still I hear the veery calling to the lonesome Toyahneeta,
And the echo, soft returning, bids me come to meet her—meet her!
Come into the purple shadows, meet her by the sleeping river,
Dreaming that upon his banks a lover found and loved forever.

Found her kissed with western glories, met her by the shadowed
water,
Marked her hand with gold and blood as Love doth mark his every
daughter
Pressed her madly to his—Dream, O River, dream it o'er and o'er!
For thy dream alone is left me neath the mystic Attacoa!

Morganton, N. C., 1901.

THE ECHO.

Attacoa, mystic altar of the Manitou, thy spirit
Still I see and, and leaning on Thee, Time who all things doth
inherit,
All but thee whose rugged crags stand epitaphs of by-gone ages,
All but thee whose stones, eternal, calm her reckless, ruthless rages,
All but thee whose furrowed brow frowns down upon her newer
pages.

Summon now the vanished maidens of the mighty Tuscaroras,
Bid them chant the plaintive strains of lovelorn melodies before us,
Melodies of mountain dells where wren and woodthrush daily dally,
Yet I know a stranger strain than Indian maiden's plaintive sally
And I hear its far-off echo in the fair Tarquoee valley.

Wandering, never-dying echo, ever and anon returning
To their birth-spot, seeking still the lips that mothered: lips once
burning
With a fiercer flame than lit the fires of the Attacoa,
Redder than the blood that gushed from chiefs who perished to
adore,
Deeper passioned than the frenzied souls who watched thine altar
glower.

Thus they say her voice from fair Tarquoee has long since departed
For the deeper vales and hollows of my bosom, broken hearted,
There I seek my Love who perished with the winter's icy breaths,
Mid my soul's for-get-me-nots and laurel crowns and ivy wreaths,
In the deep dark, lonely valley of the shadow of her death.

Morganton, N. C., 1901.

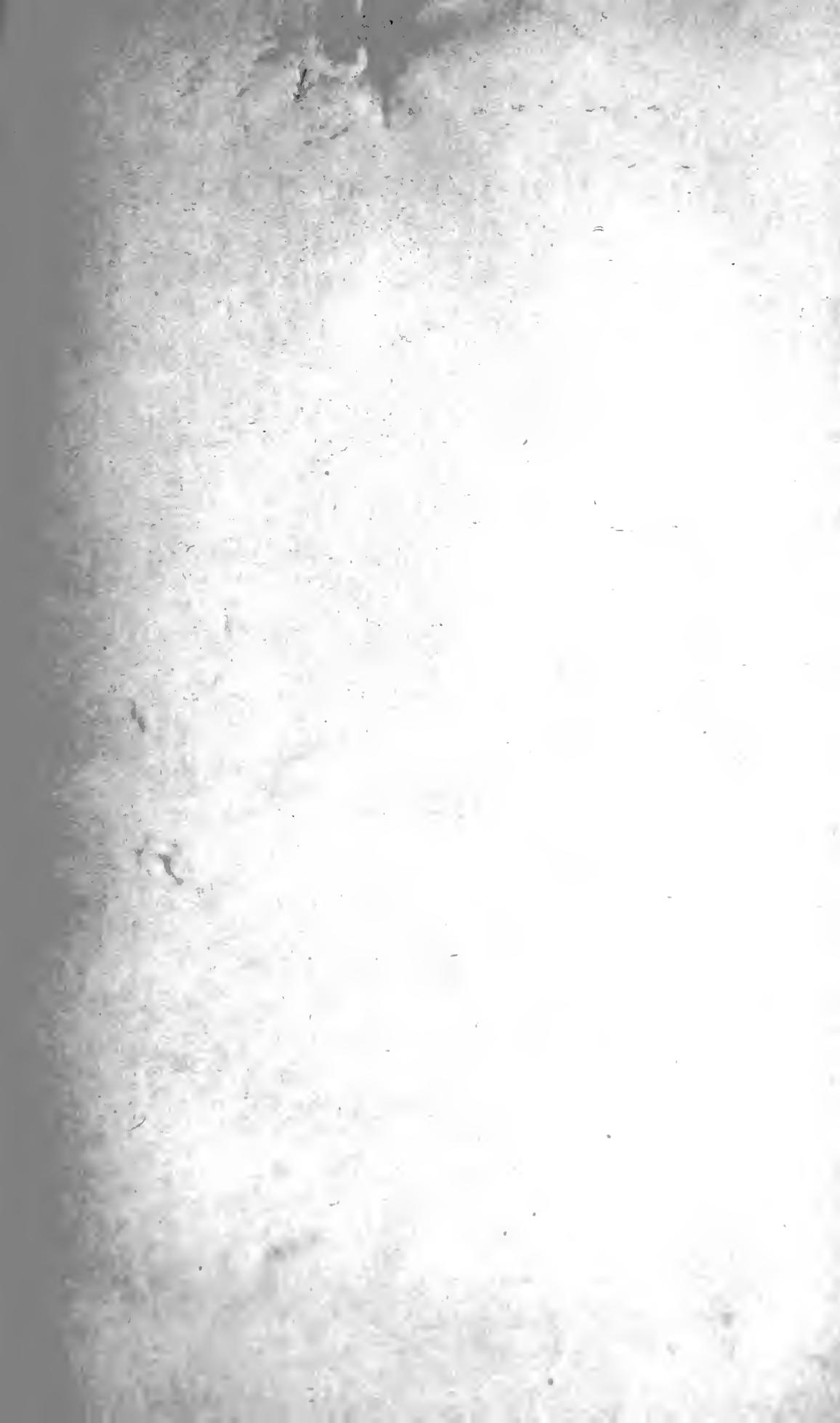
MY LITTLE MAID.

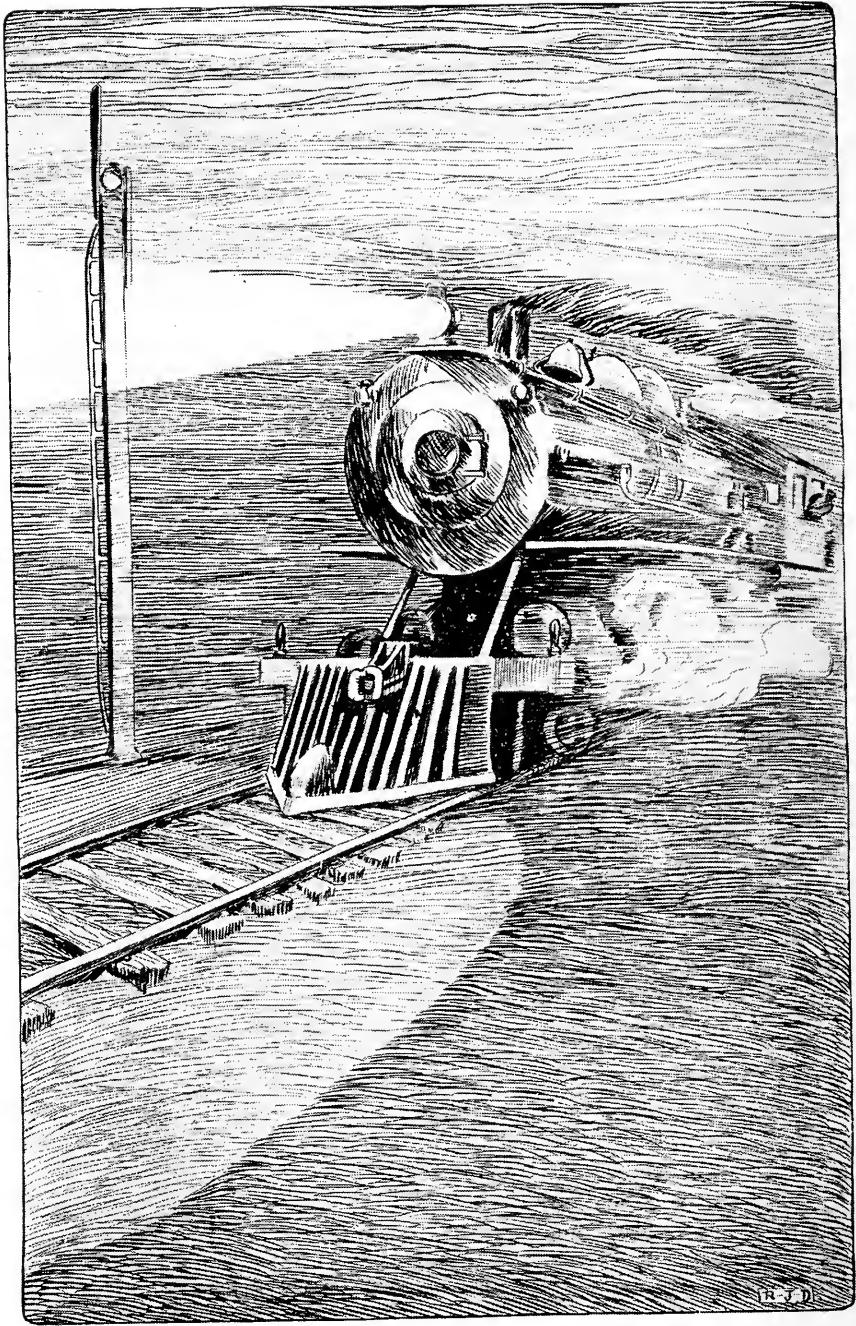
I listen alone in the moonlight,
At the edge of the forest-glade,
And dream of the moonbeams kissing
The lips of my little maid;
Remember the wood-lily fading
On the breast that it taught to fade;
The pure, white, wood-lily fading
On the breast it besought to fade.

Yet, vanished her form is beautiful,
And her heart is the heart of love;
For I watch till her bright eyes glisten
From the dark of her home above;
And I know that her soul is moving,
As the steps of the angels move;
Her crystalline soul is moving
In the depths where the angels move.

Forsaking earth's wooden glory
Of forest-shadowed gloom,
Forth to the heaven-meadow
Where fadeless lilies bloom,
We, arm in arm together,
Some day shall wander home;
We, arm in arm together,
In wonder, wander home.

Clinton, S. C., 1894.





"THE SOUTHBOUND MAIL"

"With the urge of God in her driving rod
And the hurry of hell in her heels."

THE SOUTH-BOUND MAIL.

With the urge of God in her driving rod
And the hurry of hell in her heels,
A train screams forth from the storm-throbbed North,
To the thrust of her steam-thrilled wheels,
Vain Vega shrinks as Polaris sinks
For the stars of the South arise,
And the meteor's wing, like a broken thing,
Is stayed in mute surprise.

Blood-flecked her guard with careless blood
Who loitered on her path—
Rude threats of death from blackened breath
Of elemental wrath—
The howl of the rail on her trembling trail
And the shout of the bridge, amazed—
'Tis the Thing to be Read—What matter the dead
With the Hurricane outpaced?

The semaphores shrink at the monster they blink at
Who trusts to their tremulous light,
And the storm that sweeps after brings hysterical laughter
Of lumbering freights, a-fright.
The hireling train who hastens for gain
Awaits her time on the rails,
And the limiteds hiss in terror till this
Tornado hurls the mails.

With the urge of God in her driving rod
And the hurry of hell in her heels—
So screams she forth from the storm-throbbed North
To the thrust of her steam-thrilled wheels;
So screams she forth from the want-whirled North
To the land with peace encased—
This matchless mail whose words avail
To mock the winds, outpaced.

Atlanta, Ga., 1910.

JUS' A-WHISTLIN' TO KEEP UP 'IS COU'AGE!

Dar goes ole Mister March Win' a-whistlin by my do';
Pears like he's mighty stout jus' cause dar's been a little snow,
Jus' like as tho' the winter was a-comin' stead o' goin',
Jus' like as tho' I ain't done seen de little buds a-growin'.

Ain't I done know
You gotta go?
Ain't I done seen
De comin' green?

Ain't I done hearn dem little birds a-singin' of yo' dirge,
An' you's jus' whistlin' dar, suh, a-keepin' up your cou'age.

Hol' up dar, Mister March Win', an' sit hyar by my do',
You'll git dar soon enough, sah, d' ain't no use hurryin' so!
I knows what you's a-whistlin'; I knows jus' what you says—
"I'se gwine be hyar always, sah, I'se gwine be hyar always."

A little snow
A-flyin'—flyin',
An' dar you go,
A-lyin'—lyin'—

An' jus' because you's gotta go you think you's gotta splurge,
An' all de time us niggers know you's whistlin' fer your cou'age!

Ain't I been settin' round dis do' nigh on a hundud year—
De snow a-fallin' down, sah, continual on dis hair?

I 'lows dat in my time, sah, dis nigger's done some blowin'
Jes' like as tho' his years was a-comin' stead o' goin—

But ain't I know
I gotta go?
Aain't I done seen
De comin' sheen?

'Pear like it's kinder natchul, when dey's slippin' to'uds de verge,
Fer win' an' nigger both to sorter whistle fer dey cou'age.

Nashville, Tenn., 1905.

OLE MAN FEVER.

W'en Ole Man Fever comes along
I leaves de do' wide open;
It 'sures me I'll git back outside,
And keeps my heart a-hopin';
I stands my fishin' pole right dar
Beside dat can o' bait;
I figures dat all fishermens
Is laid up soon or late—
Ole Fever-ever-iver-o,
He come along and shets de do'!

An' dis de day de little boy
An' me was goin' fishin'!
Dar he sits now on dat ole stump
A-wishin' an' a-wishin'.
Can't understan', dat little boy,
Dat 'twixt de bait an' bite
Anudder feller steals along
An' locks de fish-man tight—
Ole Fever-ever-iver-o,
He come along, an' shets de do'!

De white folks neber tolle me yit
W'at makes 'im do dat way;
Ole Marster dug 'is bait sometimes
An' laid in bed next day;
Sometimes, I 'low, he shets de do',
A way no man kin open—
Dat's why I eyes my fishin' pole,
An' lie in bed a-hopin'
Ole Fever-ever-iver-o,
Won't come along an' shet de do'!

Newton Center, Mass., 1908.

THE LONELY SEA.

'Tis midday, yet the blackness settles round,
 All, all are leaving me!
The fever's flush, the dimness! Now the sound
 Of waters ceaselessly—
Of waters moving dark and darker to
 An end to be.
A little boat alone awaits, ah, lo,
 The sea, the lonely sea!

So slowly now, so gently do we glide,
 The blackness hath its way,
No light gleams dimly from the other side
 Where dwells the day.
No little light—how dark the waters move,
 How ceaselessly!
But 'tis the ocean of His boundless love,
 The sea, the lonely sea!

Newton Center, Mass., 1908.

A TALE OF A TEDDY.

From the days when the world was a bottle of milk,
 And the earth a plane of light,
When noises were terrible things in themselves,
 And mother a strange, new sight,
The little boy learned of a big brown bear
 Who sat by his side to defend,
And he reached out his hands for the first love strokes
 Of his Ancient Companion and Friend.

Then things came to be, strange monsters on wheels,
 New creatures to creep and crawl,
A bow-wow, a moo-cow, a kitty-cat—these—
 But he loved him more than them all.
For out of his eyes looked the friendship of years
 And at night when they lay in their bed
He whispered such things in the little boy's ears,
 Who told all his secrets to Ted.

Strange things of a life he had lived in the days
 When all of the world could play,
When only the game was the universe
 And Heaven a cloudless day.
O what wonderful worlds they whispered of,
 When fearful of father's frown,
When the lights went out and the night-wind groaned
 And mother had lain them down.

Then the woman came and the school and the things
 She told of that none could see,
Of the Christmas-tide and the children who prayed
 For gifts that never could be,
Of the Christ-child—O wonderful woman to show
 Him, so young, what the few rarely prove—
How the gift of the gods is the very best gift,
 And loved with the very best love.

She asked—and they brought her their Christmas gifts
 For the giftless—to throw away;
Their broken moo-cows and kitty-cats,

A TALE OF A TEDDY.

Their bow-wows, bought for a day.
But the little boy offered his big brown bear,
 Who sat by his side to defend,
And he reached out his hand for the last love strokes
 Of his Ancient Companion and Friend.

"Now don't you tell mamma" he slowly explained,
 "Nor Daddy, they won't understand.
They told me to bring you the muley-mule
 Or the clown that broke his hand,
But *they* wouldn't do for the little, poor boys
 For I don't love *them* at all."
And the woman looked at the thing she had done,
 At the God who had come to her call.

So she wondered long at the fearful gift
 And she took it home in the night
To the mother who wept when she told the tale
 As between her tears she might.
And the cleanser came out with wondering look
 And went back with mysterious smile.
But the lad lay alone with a happy face
 And a pain that no gift could beguile.

Lo, the Christmas-tide and the holly-tree gleams
 In blue and red and white,
But who can return to our Five-year-old
 His friend of noon and night?
Fair Christmas-tide and the holly tree glows
 In blue and white and red—
And neath the tree, fresh cleansed and curled
 There waits a great, brown Ted!

Gone the days when the world was a bottle of milk
 And the earth a plane of light,
When noises were terrible things in themselves
 And mother a strange, new sight.
But a lad sleeps close by a big brown bear
 And his stories never end
Of the times he once had with another Ted,
 An Ancient Companion and Friend.

Griffin, Ga., 1910.

TO MARY.

O, that I might love thee Mary!
 Press thee one long-feigned kiss!
But my Mate is passing wary
 Of my plea for added bliss,
And my Love is pressing chary
 Of a joy she ne'er would miss.

So whene'er I meet thee, Mary
 Sweet, my heart doth whisper low:—
“See! 'Tis Heaven and laws must vary
 Where the Gods and angels go!
Is she not so like a faery
 That thy Mate would never know?”

Atlanta, Ga., 1910.

A FORETASTE?

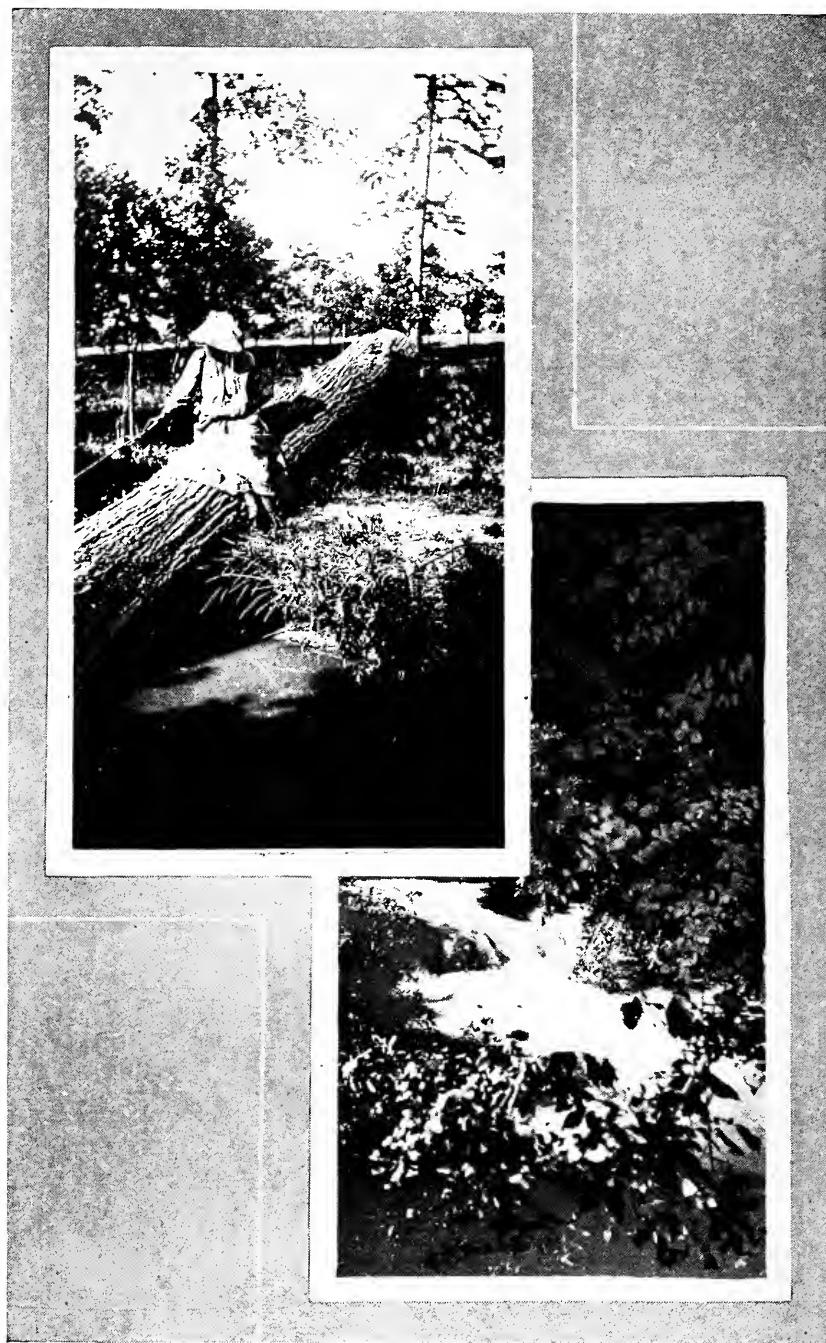
Dream-face, dream-face, bend above me,
 Trust thine image to my heart.
Bending—(Lo, 'Tis I who love thee
 Though the Father's prize thou art)
Trusting—tell my memories of thee
 Till the days of dreams depart.

As the larkspur's blue of childhood
 Deep, thine eyes to deep did call.
Lips, as muscadined wildwood,
 Goldened by the glowing Fall,
Luring sweet—O who, exiled, could
 Fail to crave thy precious thrall?

Was thy wondrous beauty lent me
 As a thing complete; to charm?
Or was mystic meaning sent me
 In the glory of thine arm?
Was a mightier music meant me
 In the rapture of thine arm?

Atlanta, Ga., 1910.





"THE URGE OF BUSH RIVER"

"Heeding not the shadowed wood,
Hardening to the thrush thy heart,
Suffering ill the angler's cord,
Fain with peace to part."

THE URGE OF BUSH RIVER.

Rippling thro' the wooded wild
Where the mint and minnow meet,
Mindest thou thy former child?
Feelest still his feet?
O little Pastor of my Dreams
The years have gone, but thou art here
And still thy hurried current seems
To say: "He waits me there!"

Heeding not the shadowed wood,
Hardening toward the thrush thy hear'
Suffering ill the angler's cord,
Fain with peace to part,
O luring, unallured stream,
Wilt whisper to me, pondering here,
The mystery of thy zeal? Thy dream?
Thy joy? "He waits thee there?"

Rememberest then the Bosomed Form
On which thou sleepedst e'er thy mis
Awoke amidst the thunderstorm,
By rainbows kissed?
Ah! this the urge that drives thee on,
In rudeness to the lily, fair,
To kneeling violet left alone
In purple rage: "He waits thee there."

O winnowed wisdom, weather-won,
Thou mindest me—thou mindest me
Of bosom-dreams in aeons gone,
On distant sea,
Of currents ever homeward bound,
Of breathings in the untracked air,
Of hurried lights and glory round
The One who Waited there.

THE URGE OF BUSH RIVER.

Ah, little brook, thy waves and mine
Break ever toward the open sea,
Nor stone may bar, nor meadowed kine
A hindrance be.
We beachward bear our portioned sand,
The boom of breakers in our ear,
O harbor of the Father-land,
He waits us there.

Clinton, S. C., 1908.

SHALL THEY BE MINE?

Tones, witching tones, soft-whispered from some dear,
 Long-past event,

Rouse, thrill my heart, and vanish with the lips—
 The lips that sent—

And answer not the cry nor heed the longing,
 Longing soul's lament.

Tones, tender tones, shall they be mine?
 One only knows:

A wordless One, inhabiting eternity's repose.

Low, gentle tones, I know not why I love
 To hear them still,

Nor why they come, unbidden, in my dreams,
 When long my will,

In conscious hours has summoned them in vain its craving,
 Craving void to fill.

Tones, tender tones, shall they be mine?
 One only knows;

A slumb'ring one who dreameth o'er life's drama to the close.

Perhaps, some happy day, he'll dream I hear again
 Those accents sweet,

And on the lips, where coming forth they press
 Their silvery feet,

I'll print a kiss, long-feigned and passion-wrapt
 When—when we meet.

Soft, silvery tones, shall they be mine?
 One only knows;

Who dreaming each life-drama, draws the curtain at the close.

Or this may-chance He'll dream; at some
 Strange love's behest,

Those gentle tones and low shall speak to thrill
 Another breast,

And leave my soul in weariness to wait
 For love and rest,

Low, witching tones, shall they be mine?
 One only knows;

The seer, only, dreaming o'er life's drama, to the close.

Morganton, N. C., 1900.

THE GRAVES ARE THERE.

O happy little town I love,
Rememb'rest me?
O bluest sky that arched above
My joys in thee,
O little town of memory;
O past, so fair,
See, for my heart returneth now—
The Graves are there!

O distant little town I love,
Here 'gainst this pane,
My cheek grows cold for thee,
And, past the rain
Beating down so furiously,
Thy forms appear;
Thy voice calls from the gloom around,
“The Graves are there!”

O sorrowed little town I love,
So mayest thou be
When comes thy child alone
To sleep in thee;
To lay him with the rest
Safe in thy care,
To slumber on thy breast—
The Graves are there!

Nashville, Tenn, 1908.

AT DARK.

O'er the brink of yonder river where the waving willows weep,
As the shadows of the sunset over darkening waters creep,
Thick and fast the dead leaves fall as autumn winds upon them
sweep.
And each leaf is bending backward,
While each hidden bud points forward,
And each bough looks ever upward,
As the winds upon them sweep,
But the hand who turns their hour-glass knows where each dead
leaf will sleep.

O'er the sorrowed, tearful river where the weak and weary weep,
As the shadows of the life-star lengthen toward the awful deep,
Deadened joys and blighted hopes fall fast before time's onward
sweep.
Swift each memory speeds backward,
While each tear is pointing forward,
And each heart looks ever upward,
At the winter's wasting sweep,
And lo! the Hand who turns their hour-glass gives each weary
spirit sleep.

Princeton, N. J., 1898.

MY SEARCH FOR GOD.

I told my soul I would search for God,
And she bade me gladly try.
So I wandered long in steps joy-shod,
Till I wearily laid me by,
In sorrow's soil to die.
But from under my head the way I had trod,
Whispered: "I
"Am God!"

I told my soul I would search for God,
And she bade me sadly try.
So I beat each beautiful bush with the rod
Of hope, lest his flame be nigh.
Then I laid me down with a sigh.
But the depth of defeat in the mouldering sod,
Whispered: "I
Am God!"

I told my soul I would search for God,
And she bade me madly try.
So I sought through the Book and the brook and the clod
For the Hand of Him, Most High
Nor voice, nor word, nor cry.
But the Infinite Longing that bade me plod,
Whispered: "I
Am God."

Atlanta, Ga., 1910.

FIVE LITTLE PANES OF DUSTY GLASS.

Five little panes of dusty glass
And an unmeasured universe await!
Yet, beautiful, O ye lovely forms I see,
And passing sweet, O luscious fruits I taste,
And charmed voices—rapturing words I hear,
And odors winged with Heaven's breaths I smell,
And touch! O God what wondrous things are these I touch?
Five little panes of dusty glass.
O mist, O mystery!

And brief the time, ah me, so short the time
To taste, to smell, to touch, to hear, to look
Through such confused, dusty, dazed ways.
So long a while between the moments when,
One (a shadow dimly seen and heard)
Doth wipe away the smudges from the panes.

So many half-lit worlds to see,
So many muffled voices hear,
Such countless forms of things to feel.
Such breaths, breast-warmed of Heaven's draught,
Such untried sweets to taste of, but—
Only a momentary glance,
Through five tiny, smeared panes of glass!

Yet, O so beautiful—
The odor of them is a universe!
So fair their favors, so entrancing sweet they seem,
So pleasing is their voice, so good the touch of all—
I crave one pane the more,
One crystal pane—and then—
O worlds, O Infinite, O God!

Atlanta, Ga., 1910.

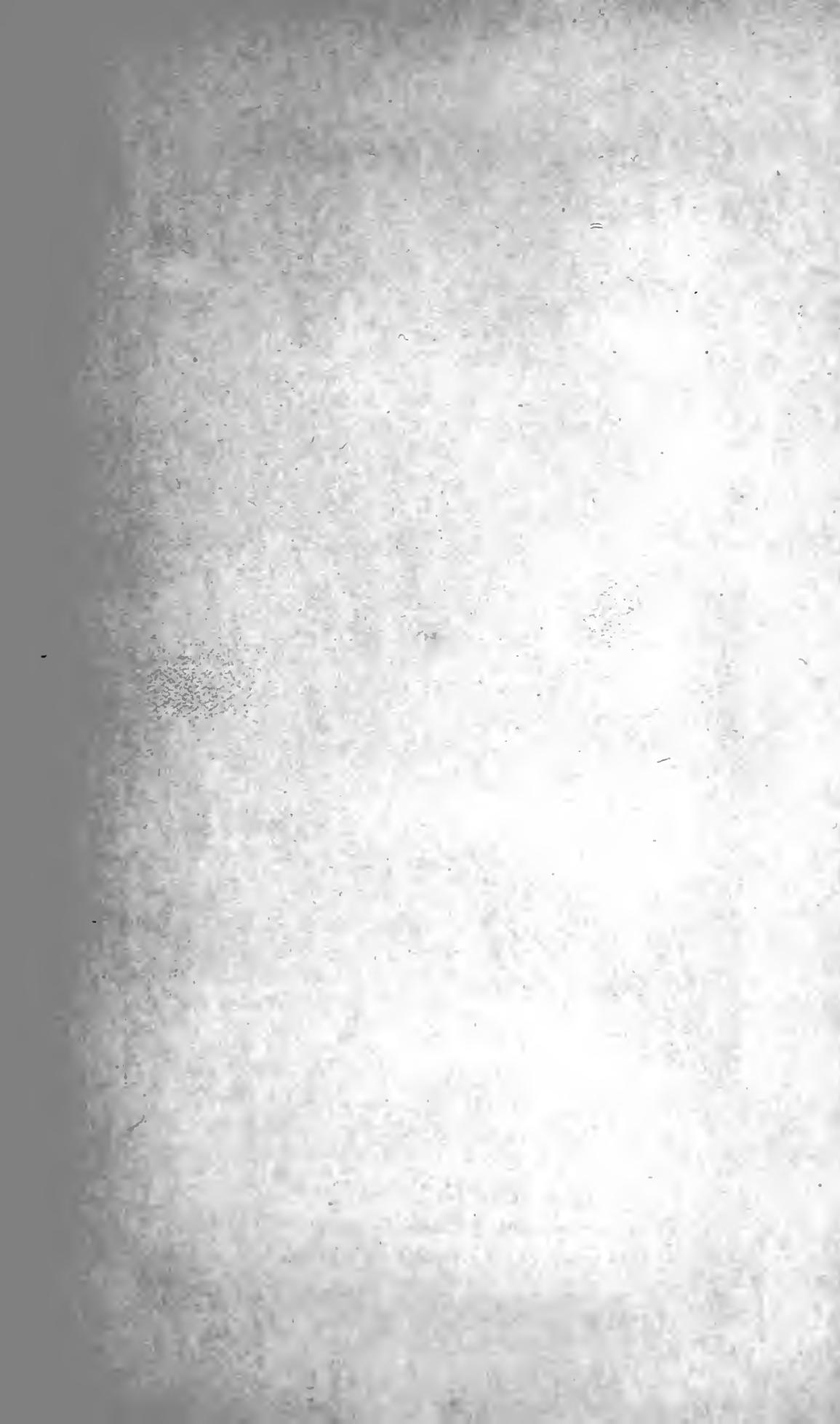
THE SIN OF THE SOUR FACE.

The man was a saint who sat at the head
And she a saint at the foot.
And they gave me meat and they gave me bread
And gold in my purse they put.
But a public nuisance in each face
Abode, till I sought escape,
And I hunted long for a pleasant place,
Till I felt the grasp of the grape.

Ah, that was a sin, and my grave is dug!
Tho' no pleasure it was to do it—
But I asked for a smile and they gave me a mug,
As sour as a vinegar cruet.
'Twas "sadly a sin my life to snuff—
And my soul to lose past grace—"
They often groaned—but they spoke not of
The Sin of the Sour Face.

O jolly-faced brute, with a silver smile,
Come, brother, my hand is given.
We'd rather go down dead-drunk, to Hell
Than peeve, as saints, in Heaven.
'Twere better to dream in delirium's death
And a smile to companions give,
Than be soured in soul and bittered in breath
By the surly-faced saint—and live.

Atlanta, Ga., 1910.





“THE SONG OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE”

“At the merciless white of the vast, winter shroud,
At the chill of his breath in their blood.”

THE SONG OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

"The mighty evergreen, Ygdrasil, bears up the whole universe. In his branches are the dwelling places of gods and men. The sun, the moon and the stars are borne on his boughs. The winds feed upon his leaves unceasingly and eternal darkness gnaws at his roots. Yet he lives—forever"—Scandinavian Legend.

With a Tree of Life the Book began,
With a Tree of Life it ended,
And the heart of it all was a Tree of Life
Wherfrom its Lord depended:
And the Uttermost Word was the Primal Tree,
Their father, Ygdrasil—I—
My leaves for the nations: expiring on me
Their Lord could most fittingly die.

Earth's empires falling are notes in my song,
Each planet a voice of my choir,
Love-bound constellations in harmony throng
Their paths which are strings to my lyre.
The Age-winds have fed their wild brood on my leaves—
The Death-wind, the War-wind, the Storm—
But the universe, star-eyed, her coronet weaves
To garland with glory my form.

So ever my boughs frost-fed, are green
And my limbs, unchilled, pierce high.
And caught in my arms stars and planets are seen
As red-berried suns of the sky.
For tipping my tiniest twig there twirls
(As a seed on a holly bough)
The Earth which I bore where the Hate-wind whirls
Begot where the Love-winds sough.

From the wail of the primal, watery waste
To the charm of this Christmas day
My father, Ygdrasil, has bidden me haste
His mystical word to say;

THE SONG OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

Has bidden me stand unafraid of the frost,
 Unamazed at the snow's vast white,
A sign of his will that the sun be not lost
 In the ice of an unlitten night.

In the long-past days when your fathers bowed
 All a-tremble with fear in the wood,
At the merciless white of the vast, winter shroud,
 At the chill of His breath in their blood,
I, the child of Ygdrasil, alone bade them hope
 For the flowers of springtime to come,
And for love of my cheer they hurried their rope
 Round my waist and in joy bore me home.

Not a twig of my branches forebore to be green
 In their caves while the Winter Wind roared;
As I told them my evergreen leaves had seen
 Many suns to the far South-sky lowered,
But they watched through the days as the Great Star fled
 And they marked his path in the sky!
Till Ygdrasil, their Lord, turned him back, as I said,
 Lest his beautiful world should die.

"All Hail, Arbor Vitae," in joy round me sang
 Their children, "O, Life-tree, 'twas true!
We love thee, we crown thee, thy branches we hang
 With bright gifts as our children shall do.
The spring-time, the bird-song, the fruits and the flow'rs
 Are returning, the Great star doth come!
And alone of the trees was there faith in thy bowers
 That the Good Hand would summon him home!"

"O Life-tree, O Love-tree, O dear Christmas Tree,
 Beloved, Bestarred, Becrown'd!
Ygdrasil, exulting, exalted shall be
 Eternally sought for and found!"—
For the love of thy fathers who worshipped my bough,
 For the message they found in my leaf;
For their life ('twas my prophecy!) light ('twas my vow!)
 Unburden thy heart of its grief!

THE SONG OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

For the Great Star may sink to the nethermost South
With his threat of the pitiless snow
And bloody-fanged Sabertooth moisten his mouth
When the campfires flicker low,
Aye, the terrible night may enshroud his dead
And all living things deathward be hurled—
Till Ygdrasil, thy Lord, turns him back, as I said,
Thy Christmas Tree, Light of thy World.

As I sing thee the song of the Thing to Be,
I have learned from the storm and the snow,
My leaves move in mystic melody
To the air that the forests know.
For the breath of his music that trembles my limb,
For my faith in the flowers to come,
Thou hast gathered me forth—as One, mystical, dim,
For thy faith soon shall gather thee home.

So I tell thee tonight of the touchless Hand,
The Unseen Giver of gifts;
A call from the common-place (curse of the land!)
To the splendor that goldens the rifts
Of the clouds that I part with my evergreen bough—
To the place of the perfect boon—
Thou hast garnered me thence from my glory, lo now
Light my leaves with the radiance of noon.

And, oh, in this wonderful song lose not thou
This chord, lest Ygdrasil should frown,
For his blood in my branches is murmuring now
Of the One thou hast sought and hast found.
Lo, my uttermost twig is a-tingle, a-wave
With the mother-sapped joy of my soul,
And together they cling till a common grave
Shall bury their brotherhood, whole.

So wait I here for thy child till the morn,
Bejeweled with silver and gold,
Fulfillment of prophecies, sacrifice-born,
For the love of thy seven-year-old;

THE SONG OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

While he sleeps with his Teddy the long night through
Till the latticed light sun-kisses sifts,
Till yon curtain is drawn for his raptured view
Of my glory, my glamour, my gifts!

Hark then to the song of thy Christmas Tree
Aglow—e'er the endless night,
Ablaze—e'er the winter that haunteth thee,
Await—for the supernal light.
Thy father, Ygdrasil—be dreamless thy sleep
Breathe thou low, till thy curtain is drawn—
In love-laden bounty thy presents shall keep
On his breast for the Ultimate Dawn.

Atlanta, Ga., 1910.

THE LURE OF THE BLANKET.

De coal's done use' up in de grate,
 De kindlin—hit's all gone.
De snow's done froze de woodpile
 An' it keeps a-fallin' on!
Dis blizzud makes my bref like steam,
 I shakes jes like I'se dyin',
D'aint no warm place but dishyear bed,
 An' dat's jes whar I'se gwine!

I'se gwinter bed an' I'se gwinter dream
 O' the sun in de ole flat-boat,
An' I doan wanter hear no winter win'
 Till de Spring's done got 'is goat.
D'aint no use a-shovellin' coal fer me,
 D'aint no use a-hollerin': "Fire!"
Dis nigger's cole an' 'its bed fer him,"
 Till d'ole thermom' gits higher!"

Atlanta, Ga., 1911.

"I'SE RISIN'."

'Wunner ef de woodpecker's buildin'
 His nes' in de ole oak tree?
For its spring-time down in Georgy
 An' its spring-time down in me;
An' I hears dat woodpecker thumpin'
 On de tin roof 'bove my haid—
In de mornin' fo' de day break—
 "Git up dar, is you daid!"
Dat's wot he say an' to dis day it seems surprisin'
An' den an' dar, I 'lows "No sah, I'se most arisin'."

'Wunner ef dey's anybody lis'nin'
 To 'im peck on dat ole oak tree
Or whedder de cabins empty
 Whar we'uns used fer to be.
I wunner ef dey's anybody layin'
 Down dar on de grass whar I laid
A watchin' his ole bill a flyin':—
 "Git up dar, is you daid?"
Dat's wot he say an' to dis day it seem surprisin'
An' den an' dar, I 'lows "No sah, I'se most arisin'."

I'se sho gwine down to Georgy
 Nex' spring when de woodpeckers come.
I'se gwinter quit col' Philadelphia
 Whar de birds is daid an' dum.
I'se gwinter dat hole in Georgy,
 In de ole oak nigh my baid
An' hear dat yellow-hammer thumpin':
 "Git up dar, is you daid?"
Dat's wot he say an' to dis day it seem surprisin'
An' den an' dar, I'll low "No sah, I'se most arisin'."

Las' night I done dremp't 'bout de woodpec'
 An' de ole oak tree down home
An' I dream dis nigger bin buried

"I'SE RISIN'."

An' de judgment day done come
An' it seem most powerful quiet
 Down dar whar I was laid,
But de ole woodpeck' kep' a-peckin':
 "*Git up dar, is you daid?*"
Dat's wot he say an' to dis day it seem surprisin'
An' den dar I 'lowed "No sah, I sho. is risin'!"

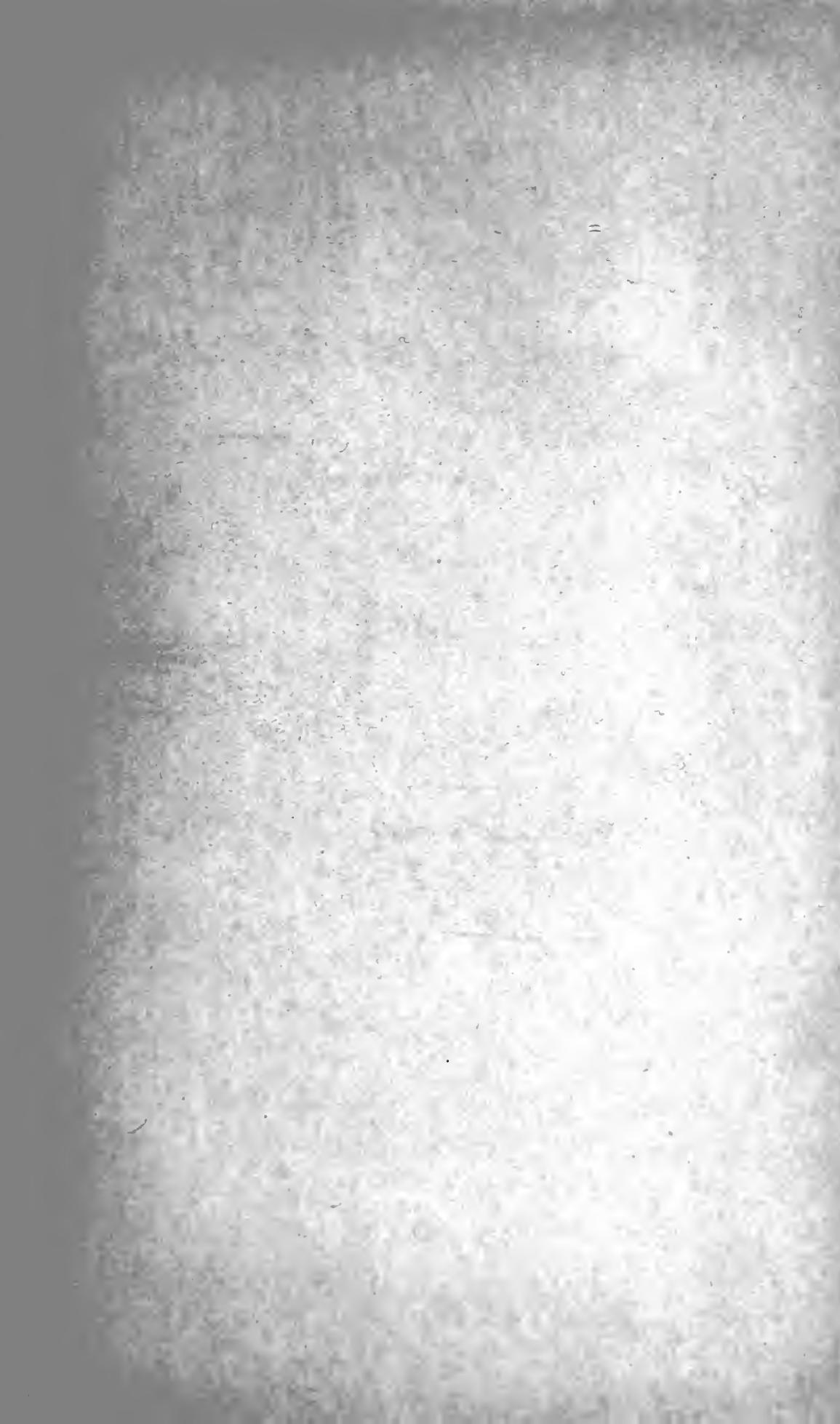
Nashville, Tenn., 1906.

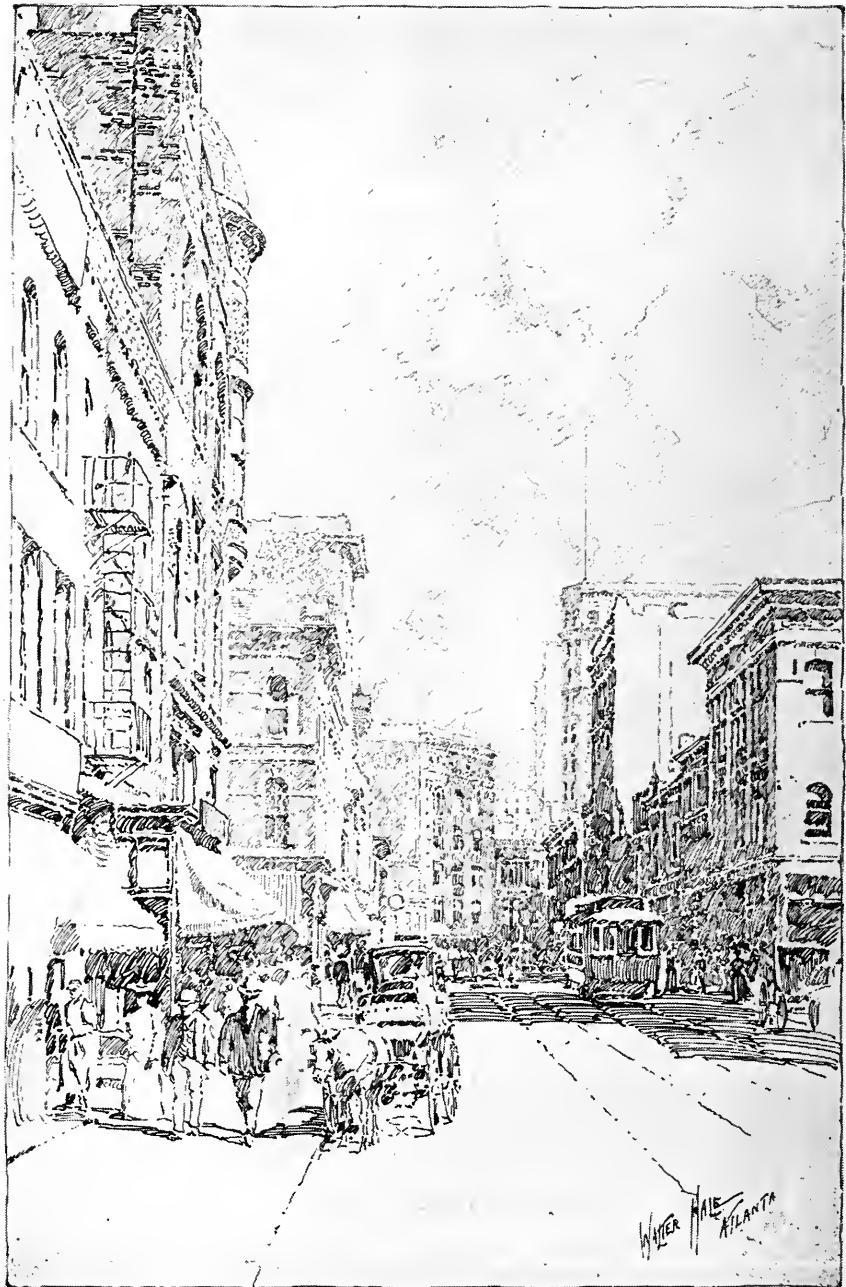
TRUST TRIUMPHANT.

Soft the snowflake, still the ice sheet,
 Cold the white world, winterdrest;
And the flowers—dear, dead flowers—
 Slumber on her breast!
But the great pines—dreaming, dark pines—
 Murmur in the covert valley, whisper on the wooded crest.

Comes the dewdrop, melts the ice-sheet,
 Rise, O rainbowed Earth, from rest;
All thy flowers—fair sweet flowers—
 Blossom on thy breast!
And the dream-pines—evergreen pines—
 Chant low in the verdant valley, sing soft on the wooded crest.

Atlanta, Ga., 1911.





"THE PSYCHIC CITY"

"Here gather all thine own to run
The race which thou dost set—
The pace thyself dost set."

THE PSYCHIC CITY.

Fairest of all the fire-born,
Fleetest of all the Gods,
Sweetest of all the Gods,
Despair of all the lyre-lorn
Who race beneath the rods,
Meet Death beneath thy rods,
Kiss Death, of all their glory shorn,
For Thee, O Atalanta,—

Comes Aphrodite boasting her
Fair Paris; Mars, Berlin—
Fierce Mars his strong Berlin:
And London, lo, of Jupiter
Her Lord who walls her in—
With empire walls her in—
But thou hast set the stars astir,
To shine on Atalanta.

Here gather all thine own to run
The race which thou dost set—
The pace thyself dost set—
Who, taught of thee, illusions shun
And golden greed forget,
(Lest goals they should forget),
For that thy glorious haste is on
Thy city, Atalanta.

O Fair, thou dost confessed stand
In those who race with thee—
In these who covet thee—
Who hither come from every land
Thy husbanders to be—
Thy victors, swift, to be—
Who court their death to win thy hand,
Unrivalled Atalanta.

Thus grows the city thou didst found,
Thy spirit brooding o'er her—
Thy wisdom watching o'er her—
Thus rise her halls on hallowed ground

THE PSYCHIC CITY.

A destiny before her—
Fair futures all before her—
By golden apples cast around,
Untempted, Atalanta.

Th' Invisible, Th' Intangible,
Thou givest to thine own,
Foundations for thine own;
Th' Intangible, Th' Inaudible,
Nor field nor river-grown—
Nor coal nor iron-grown—
Unseen, unheard, untouched Will
Thy *spirit*, Atalanta.

Fairest of all the fire-born,
Divinest urge upon her,
(Thine urgent drive upon her)
Despair of rivals left forlorn,
The fear of those who shun her,
(The weaklings' fear who shun her),
Sweep swiftly on to meet the morn,
My City, Atalanta.

Atlanta, Ga., 1910.

BACK FROM THE AGES.

Alive, ajoy, aglow I came from Death
I, who when I was dead yet hurried on.
Aglow, afire, ablaze my elements
Have shed their rays till now the light is low.
Till now the tug of Time doth draw them down,
The terror-tug of Time doth draw them back
Into the Ages whither all men go.
Ah, long my part did wait for part to find
His fellow, loitering through the countless years;
I, multi-mingled man who might not fare
Forth to bright life till every atom fell
Into his place. I, child of chance—His strange
Weird chance—came forth to this dear day—and lived!
But now—(O setting sun!)—I go away.
My world disintegrates. The friends of old
Approach me: Dullness, Darkness, Blindness, these
And Silence (O thou happy hearted noise!):
Old friends that with me were in my long wait
To live, who would with me again abide—
Farewell, Fair World, till we shall meet once more
As meet we shall when he doth cast the dice
Just as they fell before when forth I came
To light. Aeons shall lie as dust upon
His dial-plate whose seconds tell the death
Of suns grown cold while waiting on his will,
But come I shall tho' myriad's myriad worlds
Shall fall forth from his cup and have their day
Before the lucky cast shall summon us.
For when they all have gone my parts shall hear
Their cues and they shall come from far to be—
From calcium-clouded, cosmic dust, from dead
Stars, from wee planets, warmed by unweighed suns;
From drifting meteor bands of coveyed worlds;
Come forth when He shall cast the lucky throw
That sets the sun a center for his train,
The world again a theater for men,

BACK FROM THE AGES.

And men and world and sun the same as when
He cast us all into his lap before.
And this I know for he doth never cease
To play at making universes new,
(At making universes old he plays),
And in His game toys with the centuries
As toy eternities with tiny hours.
And he will gather me to act again
My part with those who played for him. For this
He needeth naught save time—and who may say
There lacketh centuries to wait his will?

Atlanta, Ga., 1911.

YELLOW JASMINE.

Thy mellow bells of yellow
Have called me from afar,
They tell, O thou my fellow,
What Heaven's holies are:
Of restful reveries below,
Of dreams in slumbering sod,
Ah, who of us shall first awake
To find that he is God?

O yellow bells and mellow,
The flowers hear thy call:
Faint hello for each fellow
A-sleep, a-silence, all!
O goldened, faith-emboldened soil
O note o'er-drowning doubt,
The wearied world forsakes its toil
To search thy glory out.

Thy dell, O bells of yellow,
With tones of reach and range,—
Thy cello, deep and mellow—
Upstirs in Easter change.
The blue-eyed violet wets with tears
Of joy the conquered clod;
The dogwood listens, white with fears;
The woodbine flames with God.

At thy mellow bells and yellow,
Brave, the bluebird sings,
Bold, the hello of thy fellow—
Flowers greets the spring.
For wonder at thy sweetened breath
The reverent daisies nod,
Azaleas crimson, shamed from death,
To hear that they are God!

Thy mellow bells of yellow
Have called me from afar

YELLOW JASMINE.

To dwell, O faith's boon-fellow,
 Where Heaven's holies are;
Mid mysteries of dark, dead things,
 Mid dreams of moulded sod,
Mid resurrection's petalled kings,
 Mid pistilled peals for God.

Atlanta, Ga., March, 1911.

MISMATED.

He cast my lot in His lap
And loaded the dice as He chose,
So my mate fell forth from His faithless trap,
 Of the sort He was pleased to dispose.
And He woke me from beauteous dreams with a slap
 And added her weight to my woes.

Then He sat me by His side,
 To watch the dice as they fell,
And He groaned as my raptured eyes opened wide
 At the beautiful angel, Estelle.
For, who loves the lot of another has died
 And abides in Hell.

Atlanta, Ga., 1910.

THE SONG OF THE LABORING MAN.

I sing the song of the laboring man
Who works and works and works.
With sweated brow and soiled hand
And loss for what he shirks.

In want and insecurity,
In dirt and all impurity,
In darkness and obscurity
He works and works and works.
Unhonored he and all unknown
Save by the One who loves his own,
The One who works and works.

I sing the song of the laboring man
Who works and works and works,
Who with God's towel girds his loins
And serves mid sneers and smirks ;
Who serves when shivering with cold,
Who serves when flushed of fever's hold,
Who serves with little pay of gold
To tempt where danger lurks.
With much to do and nought to say,
Thus bends he on his toilsome way
Thus breaks his back day after day
Who works and works and works.

I sing a song with the laboring man
Who worked and worked and worked,
Who served me in another land
And nought of duty shirked ;
Who labored in the long night rain,
Of labor long and hard was slain,
And, rudely with his fathers lain,
Found rest of toil and work,
Now sings he lustily and true :
“My Father worketh hitherto
And I must work and work.”

Clinton, S. C., 1904.



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